

POLICE AND COMMUNITY YOUTH CENTRES — GOVERNMENT AND POLICE COMMITMENT

520. Mr P. ABETZ to the Minister for Police:

Before I ask the question, on behalf of the member for Wanneroo, I acknowledge the presence in the public gallery of the year 9 students from Ashdale Secondary College; and on behalf of the member for Morley, I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of the Morley Senior High School students. I was going to get to the member for Morley.

I refer to recent media reports about the WA Police commitment to supporting police and community youth centres. Can the minister please advise whether there has been a change to the government's or the Commissioner of Police's position, as alleged by the member for Midland?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY replied:

I thank the member for Southern River for this question. I want to make it very, very clear to all members that there has been no change in the government's position with respect to police officers being associated with PCYCs, and there has been no change either to the position of the Commissioner of Police with respect to police officers being assigned to PCYCs. In fact, in May this year, the Commissioner of Police announced that he would increase the number of police officers who would be made available to police and community youth centres from 16 to 20. In addition, the police commissioner, the PCYC and I have come to an agreement that we think it is inappropriate for police officers to be involved in administrative duties at PCYCs. As a result of the shift from police officers being engaged in admin duties to being involved in youth-at-risk programs, WA Police has resourced PCYCs with \$3 million over three years so that they can have non-police staff stacking vending machines and processing the application forms for PCYC membership and all those sorts of things. So, the police officers will be engaged in youth liaison and they will be engaged in delivering the priority offender programs through the PCYCs.

Earlier this week, on 17 September, the youth policing division assigned some officers to assist with Operation Redirect and Operation Safe Place to run over a four-week period. Those programs, Operation Redirect and Operation Safe Place, are also youth diversion programs similar to the programs that the PCYCs offer. Members might be interested to know that over a two-day period, Operation Redirect collected 33 kids who were identified as being absent from school without authority and returned them to school. The communication between PCYC and WA Police around the assignment of those officers could have been better, and I have portrayed to WA Police that the communication between PCYC and WA Police around the assignment of those officers needs to be improved. As a result, some of the youth offender programs at Rockingham PCYC—the Weld to Life program and the Right to Write program—were jeopardised. The Right to Write program was cancelled this morning because the police officer assigned to it was assigned dual roles; he was assigned to one of the other programs run by WA Police and PCYCs. I have been assured by WA Police that police officers will be available for the Right to Write and Weld for Life programs over the next four weeks while police officers are also engaged in Operation Redirect and Operation Safe Place during the school holidays.

I wanted to put on the record the fact that our position has not changed. The position of the commissioner has not changed. The police officers involved in youth liaison will still be engaged in youth liaison with PCYCs in addition to Operation Redirect and Operation Safe Place. I have put to WA Police and the PCYCs that it is probably in the best interests of those offender programs and in the interests of those young offenders that they come to some sort of memorandum of understanding or agreement so that everybody is clear about where the officers will be, which programs they will be available to assist with and, in addition, have a detailed communication agreement so it is very, very clear when officers are shifted from program to program. This will ensure that PCYCs know where the officers will be, the officers know where they will be and, most importantly, the children involved in the youth-at-risk programs are able to attend those programs and liaise with WA Police, which is the entire purpose of PCYCs.