

POLICE — CRIME SANCTION RATE

2123. Mr B.S. Wyatt to the Minister for Police:

I refer to the Minister's statement in the House on 20 March 2014 that 'changes have been made to our domestic violence reporting requirements which have increased the number of offences being recorded against a selection of verified offences – and that they have affected the sanction rate as well', and I ask:

- (a) what specific changes were made to the domestic violence reporting requirements that impacted on the sanction rate;
- (b) when were these changes made;
- (c) how did these changes impact on the sanction rate;
- (d) which specific offences that were 'recorded against a selection of verified offences' increased; and
- (e) what is the sanction rate for domestic violence offences for each of 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014?

Mrs L.M. Harvey replied:

- (a) The definition of a family and domestic relationship as per section 4 of the *Restraining Orders Act 1997* (the ROA) was introduced in 2004. Until December 2013, the identification of any relationship under this definition required the submission of an incident report for any incident, regardless of relationship or circumstance.

Western Australia Police apply rules within the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS), which state that an incident will be recorded as one or more offences if prima facie and on the balance of probabilities, the circumstances as reported or detected amount to a crime defined by law and fall within the jurisdiction of the police agency and further, there is no credible evidence to the contrary.

At times this means that offences are often recorded when offences cannot be proven or resolved, i.e. when Family Domestic Violence (FDV) victims do not engage with police, but an offence (e.g. assault) is suspected to have occurred — in these instances police record these incidents as a Family and Domestic related crime. It is common for these offences to be cleared due to insufficient evidence (non-sanctioned clearance) as per the policy described below.

In September 2011, Western Australia Police introduced FDV policy such that only two types of clearance types are permitted without additional internal consultation, these include 'offender processed' and 'insufficient evidence'. Only 'offender processed' contributes to a sanctioned cleared offence. Other sanctioned clearance types such as withdrawn or civil/other are not generally used to clear FDV offences.

- (b) The ROA was amended in 2004. Western Australia Police policy changed to include the existence of any relationship as a precursor for reporting after this time. The National Crime Statistics Unit Board of Management meeting endorsed in principle the NCRS in 2006. The Western Australia Police FDV policy for 'offender processed' and 'insufficient evidence' was introduced in 2011. A refined definition of FDV relationships was introduced in policy in December 2013 to ensure that resources focus on the core group of victims, being intimate partners and immediate family members, especially women and children.
- (c) In 2004 changes to the ROA meant wider relationship types were included within reporting, meaning more incidents were identified as FDV incidents and reported on.

Applying this rule within the NCRS resulted in police recording offences at times without sufficient evidence to support a charge. In these circumstances these offences will be cleared as 'insufficient evidence'.

Policy recommending that 'insufficient evidence' is used instead of other sanctioned clearance types (i.e. withdrawn/civil) means that many of the offences recorded to satisfy the ROA and the NCRS will not achieve a sanctioned clearance.

- (d) Domestic assault offences.
- (e) The following table shows the number of verified and sanctioned domestic assault offences and the sanction rate for the financial years 2008–09 to 2013–14 (at 31 March 2014):

	2008–09	2009–10	2010–11	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14
Verified	8 321	8 532	9 794	10 859	13 655	11 651
Sanctioned	5 394	5 043	4 724	4 285	4 394	2 950

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Mr Ben Wyatt; Mrs Liza Harvey

Sanction rate (%)	64.8	59.1	48.2	39.5	32.2	25.3
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