

POLICE — FEMALE OFFICERS

148. Ms A.R. MITCHELL to the Minister for Police:

Can the minister please clarify the percentage of women employed within the police as police officers and can she also advise how this compares with other jurisdictions?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY replied:

I thank the member for Kingsley for this very pertinent question, given that International Women's Day has just passed on Sunday, which in this day and age is a fortnight's worth of celebrations, and as we run out of days in the week in which to celebrate the achievements of Western Australian women. I am sure members in the house would be pleased to know that as at 30 June 2014 we had 1 366 sworn female police officers in WA Police, which as I said yesterday is 22.1 per cent of the sworn officer workforce. This is a substantial improvement. Members will be pleased to note that when we came to office in 2008 that number was 1 114 sworn female police officers, which is about 19.7 per cent of the sworn officer workforce. That figure is still below what both the Commissioner of Police and I consider is acceptable, and we are putting a considerable amount of effort into not only increasing the number of women in WA Police, but also ensuring that they move through to the executive level and through to commissioned officer level so that they can play a part in setting the strategic direction for WA Police. We are doing this by focusing on recruitment. Members have probably noticed that our advertisements feature female police officers going about the work of police. For continuous professional development, we engage in leadership development and mentoring programs that are targeted through our women in leadership strategy. We have acting opportunities for women in higher duties. We are pursuing a national strategy for women in policing and we are represented by a very fine assistant commissioner, Michelle Fyfe, who is our representative on the Australia New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency forum.

What is really important to note, though, is that if we compare ourselves with other jurisdictions, notably New Zealand and the other states, we are now the second-ranking policing jurisdiction for the ground we are making up and the progress we have made in recruiting female police officers in the whole of the Australia and New Zealand region.

Mr J.R. Quigley interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Butler, I call you to order for the second time.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: When we came to government we went from being the sixth lowest to the second highest as far as making up for lost ground in the recruitment of female police officers.

Tonight I will attend a police graduation at which 58 police officer recruits will graduate, and 14 of those are women.

Ms M.M. Quirk: How many from multicultural backgrounds?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Member for Girrawheen, at the last police graduation I attended, there were 29 graduates, 13 of whom were women. Clearly, our policy of targeting women to join the police is working.

This is one of our strategies to improve the gender pay gap in Western Australia. We are looking also at flexible working arrangements for police officers. But when we look at the public sector performance —

Ms L.L. Baker interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Maylands, I call you to order for the first time.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Our performance in the public sector over the past 10 years has seen our participation rate for women in the public sector rise from 63.8 per cent 10 years ago to 71.7 per cent now. The participation rate in the broader workforce is around 43.6 per cent, so we are doing very well there. We are doing very well with senior executive management in the public sector. Our participation rate has increased.

Ms L.L. Baker interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Maylands, I call you to order for the second time.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Our participation rate has increased from 19.1 per cent in 2000 to 30 per cent in 2014. This is not happening by accident. We have targeted policies in place. Every single minister of cabinet is aware of those policies to facilitate, promote and mentor women of talent and ambition within the public sector so that they can move through to senior ranks. We will maintain our effort in that space because we know it is important and we know that it is one of the important strategies to address the gender pay gap in Western Australia.