

VIOLENCE RESTRAINING ORDERS

371. Mrs M.H. ROBERTS to the Minister for Police:

I refer to the recent *Four Corners* program on the issue of violence restraining orders, and note the minister's comments on radio on 1 August. She said, and I quote, "Police have changed the way they approach and deal with VROs." Specifically what has changed in the past two years in the police approach to VROs, and how does that provide greater comfort to women needing protection?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY replied:

I thank the member for the question.

Domestic violence is a serious issue in this state. It is a very distressing event for any family to be part of. It is also a very distressing event for our police officers and government service agencies that often deal with the families who are the victims of domestic violence.

I saw the *Four Corners* program and I have read the coroner's report into the Andrea Pickett murder. The coroner's report came up with several recommendations. The first and seventh recommendations relate to policing. The first recommendation is that the Department for Child Protection, the Department of Corrective Services and WA Police work together to put in place management plans to help enhance victim support and safety. The seventh recommendation is to do with WA Police and the Department of Corrective Services working together to ensure that there is more effective management of parolees.

We have passed legislation in the area of violence restraining orders that will now result in the perpetrators of breaches of violence restraining orders potentially facing a term of imprisonment. Police officers have also changed the way they operate in the domestic violence space.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: How have they done that?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: In relation to violence restraining orders, police officers will issue a 72-hour breach notice, which will help to separate the victims and allow a cooling-off period. In that 72-hour period police officers will have victims get in touch with support services. One of the other changes made by WA Police is to the status of refugees. If a person goes missing from a women's refuge, that refuge will now be treated as a person of authority. That means that a missing person's report from a refuge has the highest priority and police will respond to it with the highest level of urgency. The police have also been focusing on the timely commencement and completion of investigations and harm minimisation through referral agencies.

For my part, one of the first things I did when I became minister was to read the coroner's report into the Andrea Pickett murder. Before the coroner's report was brought down, WA Police had done an internal review into its management of that case. That review uncovered some failings in the management of the Andrea Pickett case. Out of that, in 2009 WA Police set up a family domestic violence co-location model, which was rolled out in metropolitan WA, and in 2010 we rolled it out in regional WA. That model is all about having child protection officers co-located with the police service to offer support for victims of domestic violence. Women, some men and also children are victims of domestic violence. I meet regularly with the Minister for Child Protection, the Minister for Corrective Services and the Attorney General to make sure that we stay active in the space of domestic violence. The heads of our agencies also meet together regularly to ensure that the agencies are working together.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: That's not new, though, is it? That's been happening for years.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: It actually is new, and it was a recommendation in the report. Much lip service has been paid in the past to the agencies working together, but we are serious about this and our department heads are getting together.

I also had some concerns about some of the aspects of the coroner's investigation into the Andrea Pickett murder. I have written to the Commissioner of Police outlining a number of concerns, requesting what the police response is and how the police will in future manage aspects that were raised in the coroner's report into the Andrea Pickett case. I also requested further follow-up on recommendations that the internal police review made of the police response to domestic violence and am awaiting a response from the commissioner. However, domestic violence is one of those issues that comes up in my regular meetings with the commissioner and the assistant commissioner, and will continue to be so while I am minister.