

POLICE — MANDATORY SENTENCING LAWS

105. Mr J. NORBERGER to the Minister for Police:

Police play a vital role in protecting our community. Can the minister please advise the house on how the Liberal-National government is helping to protect our police officers?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY replied:

I thank the member for Joondalup for the question and for his increasing and consistent interest in policing matters.

Mr P.B. Watson interjected.

The SPEAKER: Thank you! The minister.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: That is an incredibly inappropriate comment for a member of Parliament to make in this place.

Several members interjected.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: He has made an inference that the member for Joondalup is involved in crime, and I find that offensive.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: I never heard what he said. Through the Chair, please, minister.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I will take the opportunity to speak about the success of the state government's mandatory sentencing regime for those people who would assault police officers. I know the member for Joondalup is particularly interested in this, after a very high-profile case has been settled in —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Joondalup, I call you to order for the first time. We are not making good time at all. The minister.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I know that the member for Joondalup was quite interested in this in response to some comments that were reported in the newspaper from a presiding magistrate who was lamenting the fact that he was compelled to impose a mandatory penalty against a person who had assaulted a police officer. We make no apology for introducing that legislation. When we came to government in 2008, one of our election commitments was to introduce mandatory minimum penalties for those people who would assault police officers. That was in response to the unprecedented level of assaults against police officers that had been occurring in the preceding years.

As a result of our legislation, adults who are convicted of assaulting a public officer, a police officer, and causing grievous bodily harm will receive a mandatory minimum penalty of 12 months. If it is assault occasioning bodily harm in aggravated circumstances, we are looking at nine months as a mandatory minimum; and obviously for assault causing bodily harm, we are looking at six months. A review of our legislation, member for Joondalup, back in 2014 showed that there had been a 27 per cent decrease in the number of assaults against police officers since the legislation was introduced.

Just last month, there was the case that the member for Joondalup was referring to and had spoken to me about of a woman who has been jailed for six months for biting a policewoman on her inner thigh and elbowing her in the face. This has been through a number of different court processes, and now, as an outcome of those processes, that woman has been sentenced to jail for a mandatory minimum term of six months. We think that is the right outcome. Our legislation has certainly been tested, and we remain committed to bringing legislation to this place that will protect our police officers and support the valuable work they do in our community.