

POLICE — COMMUNITY FORUMS

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

I refer to the so-called community forum that the minister attended in the member for Girrawheen's electorate last week that was attended by two senior police officers.

- (1) Why has the minister repeatedly said that the community forum was organised by the local member, when the local member was not even invited?
- (2) Given that the meeting was held in the minister's neighbouring Assembly seat, which is within the North Metropolitan Region, what excuse does the minister have for stating that an East Metropolitan Region member of Parliament, Hon Alyssa Hayden, was the local member?
- (3) Why will the minister not admit that this was a Liberal campaign event for its new candidate for the seat of Mirrabooka?

Mr M.J. Cowper interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister, I do not need to hear from you. Minister for Training and Workforce Development, I call you to order for the first time today.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: To continue —

- (4) Given that the minister said on TV that the police officers were invited, and then, the next morning on radio, she said they went of their own volition after they happened to see a flyer, which of the minister's statements is true?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY replied:

- (1)–(4) I thank the member for Midland for this question. I was invited to attend a law and order community forum at Balga by the local member, Hon Alyssa Hayden.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: She is not the local member!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: She is an MLC; the upper house member —

Mrs M.H. Roberts: For the east metro region!

The SPEAKER: Member for Midland, I formally call you to order for the first time today.

Mr M.P. Whitely: She's been told, "When you're under pressure—smile!"

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I am smiling at a number of things right now, member for Bassendean.

Two police officers were in attendance at that community forum. I would like to make it really clear that this was not a Liberal Party fundraising event. It would be inappropriate for uniformed officers to attend a fundraising event for any political party. This was a community law and order forum and there were a number of members of the community there. One of the important things that —

Mrs M.H. Roberts: Were they invited or not?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Members of the community were invited.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: No, the police officers. You have said two separate things so far.

Several members interjected.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: The officers in attendance —

Mrs M.H. Roberts interjected.

The SPEAKER: My observation is that only one person has asked the question—that is, the member for Midland. Only one person is answering the question—that is, the Minister for Police. The Minister for Police is the only person I want to hear answering the question.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I arrived at the community forum and two officers were in attendance. I had no control over the invitation list for this community forum, but I was pleased to see the officers there because a number of issues were raised in that community forum that I believe would be of interest to any police officer who happens to be in control of policing in any area under their jurisdiction.

Mrs M.H. Roberts interjected.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: It is important to note here that WA Police has a policy on the attendance of uniformed officers at community forums. Specifically, members should —

Mrs M.H. Roberts interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Midland, if you want an answer to the question, I humbly suggest that you listen to what the minister is saying. You will have an opportunity to ask a supplementary question if you are not fully satisfied. I do not know that continually interjecting will help your cause at this point.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I have a police policy here that I am happy to table for the interest of members. It is titled “Endorsement of Political Candidates”. It states —

Specifically, Members should at all times:

- Avoid participating in photographs or filming in company with political candidates, where it is considered the images or vision may be used in campaign materials —

Point of Order

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Mr Speaker, I asked whether the officers were invited and whether this goes to the truth of what the minister is saying. She is declining to answer the question and is going off on a tangent.

The SPEAKER: It is not a point of order, member. Minister, I do not want the answer to go remarkably longer than it has.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I think it is important that members are clear on this policy and I am happy to table it. It states that police officers should —

- Avoid participating in photographs or filming in company with political candidates, where it is considered the images or vision may be used in campaign materials at a later point;
- Seek advice from supervisors where politicians or political candidates seek attendance by police officers at public meetings or community ‘rallies’ to provide commentary on law and order issues;
- Refer all requests by politicians or political candidates to participate in ‘ride-alongs’ with police or visit police facilities to the Director Media and Public Affairs for assessment and decision.

...

In cases where WA Police officers are candidates for political election, such officers may not use images or vision of themselves in WA Police uniform in any campaign material or context.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: I have not asked any of this.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: The member of Midland may like to reassess her position in light of “Endorsement of Political Candidates” and the WA Police policy on this. I am also willing to table for the interest of members of the house a copy of the member for Midland’s letterhead. Right along the bottom of the letterhead is a picture of uniformed police officers, which seems to me to be in direct contravention of the policy of WA Police. I view my letterhead to be an endorsement and an advertisement for the services I provide to my electorate. I expect that the member for Midland thinks the same thing. I table these two documents for the remainder of this day’s sitting.

[The papers were tabled for the information of members.]