

POLICE — EQUIPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

189. Ms C.M. TONKIN to the Minister for Police:

I refer to the record growth in the number of police officers under the McGowan Labor government.

- (1) Can the minister advise the house how this government's record investment in frontline police services, including equipment and infrastructure, is supporting police officers to protect our community?
- (2) Is the minister aware of any attempts to undermine this investment in the Western Australia Police Force?

Mr P. PAPALIA replied:

I thank the member for her question and her fulsome support of the Western Australia Police Force. It stands in stark contrast to some other people in Parliament—not on our side of Parliament, but some other people in Parliament.

- (1)–(2) The McGowan government has supported the Western Australia Police Force like no other. This government has delivered, in the course of the last six years, body armour for every single police officer. They have two sets. It is sized to individual officers. Every police officer has body-worn cameras. We have the wonderful mobile phone distribution to all police officers, which, apart from giving them a mobile phone, connects them to databases so that they have connectivity and situational awareness like never before.

In the term of this government, we ended section 8s for police officers who are retired medically so that they are no longer treated like criminals. They are given a respectful passage out of the police force. We have also done something that the previous government said was impossible. We created a police compensation scheme without any diminution of entitlements for police officers, something that the previous government said could not be done, and I am very proud of the fact that this government delivered on that.

We are replacing equipment, giving our police force world-class capabilities, like completely replacing the air wing's helicopters. For the first time, we will have the same type of helicopters, the world-class Airbus H125s. We are also replacing the tactical response group's rigid-hulled inflatable boats and continuing to roll out world-leading equipment like the use of satellite communications to turn individual police cars in our remote regions into hubs that provide connectivity equivalent to that of officers in the metropolitan area to police officers in the regions.

This comes on top of massive investment in infrastructure around the state. Fourteen police stations were refurbished in recent years right across the regions and in the cities, in places such as Belmont, Narrogin, Merredin, Laverton and Katanning. All across the city old stations that have been neglected for many decades were refurbished and renewed. We are also in the process of rolling out brand new facilities in Armadale. Very shortly, that police and justice complex will be complete and opened. Forrestfield will get a new police station, as will Fremantle. Fremantle district will be getting a Fremantle district headquarters and police station. All of that is happening.

However, the opposition, the Liberal Party in particular, undermines our police force. It constantly criticises the police force and regularly makes public comments about police indicating that they are incapable or there are concerns about their morale or their culture. Only recently, the opposition said that a high level of disenchantment permeates throughout the police force. This police force has the highest satisfaction rating in the country, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics. This police force did the biggest cocaine bust in the nation's history only a couple of weeks ago. This police force in recent years kept our state safe and delivered extraordinary outcomes in the Nick Martin murder case and, of course, the rescue of Cleo. These are extraordinary outcomes and the police force is enjoying, rightly, a record level of satisfaction in the wider community.

It is worth interrogating a little more the comments by the opposition this week only with respect to claims made about police numbers. It was claimed by members opposite that three regions in regional Western Australia had 110 unfilled police positions. The regions they were referring to were the Gascoyne, the goldfields and the Kimberley. Anyone who knows anything about police numbers and the way we account for officers across the state knows that at any one time officers are in transit from one location to another, on posting, on leave or extended leave, like maternity leave or long service leave, and they are counted in the police numbers as not yet being at that location, so it is notionally a vacancy. But in reality, the officers are there; they have been posted there. We know the three regions to which this release by Hon Peter Collier referred, claiming that there were 110 vacancies, are 120 more officers stronger than they were under the Barnett government. There are 120 more officers across those three regions now than there were in 2016. Actually, under this government, the number has increased by almost the same number that the member claimed we are short.

The interesting part of the claims made about crime is that, apart from anything else, there are about 400 more officers across the state than there were under the Barnett government. Also, crime overall is down right across the state. In the two remaining Liberal Party seats in this house, there has been an extraordinary outcome in the reduction in crime.

Dr D.J. Honey: It's the great job we do as local members.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I will give the member that! The officers and the customer service officer at the Cottesloe Police Station are benefiting from the member for Cottesloe's leadership. I think there has been something like a 25 per cent reduction in crime in his electorate and a more than 30 per cent reduction in the member for Vasse's electorate. I look forward to them commending the Western Australia Police Force and the government on their excellent delivery of police services to their electorates and improvement in police services.