

POLICE — RECRUITMENT

873. Ms E.L. HAMILTON to the Minister for Police:

I refer to the record levels of local and international police recruitment by the Cook Labor government.

- (1) Can the minister outline to the house how this significant increase of police officers will continue to keep the community safe?
- (2) Can the minister advise the house how this government's approach to addressing crime compares with the approach taken by the Liberal Party and the Nationals WA?

Mr P. PAPALIA replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for her question and for her strong support of the Western Australia Police Force. Being the representative of the home of the Western Australia Police Academy, I understand how closely aligned the member is with the activities of the academy and the police force in general. Western Australia leads the nation in the quality of our police force and in recruiting and attracting people interested in joining the police force. On the eastern seaboard, the other police forces are struggling. They are actually poaching each other's police and people who might be considering joining the police force from interstate. In Western Australia, we do not confront that challenge. We have 1 600 Western Australians who have applied to join our police force. Beyond that, members know that we have over 1 400 qualified and experienced officers from the United Kingdom, Ireland and New Zealand who have also applied, which means we have a big pipeline of potential recruits for the academy and our only challenge is getting them through the academy and out the other end fast enough. For the first time in a long time, we are running multiple courses at once. I am informed that by probably February next year, there will be 440 recruits at the academy at any one time.

Think about that. The government set itself the lofty aim of growing the Western Australia Police Force by 15 per cent, which is 950 above attrition. There will be 440 officers at the academy training at the same time. We will be pushing through 1 000 recruits in 12 months. It is an incredible contribution, a huge increase in the police force capacity and a reflection of the esteem in which the Western Australia Police Force is held that we have had no trouble attracting people to join. We are also equipping them magnificently. It is the best-equipped police force in this nation and one of the best in the world. People would have seen that we are buying new helicopters, and we have bought new BearCats and rigid-hulled inflatable boats for the tactical response group. All our officers have been equipped with body armour, body-worn cameras and mobile devices to keep them in contact. They have connectivity in their vehicles with the State Operations Command Centre, which is an innovation that brings together intelligence with real-time operations, and we will roll out Starlink across 550 cars in 129 police stations throughout the state, connecting our police to 24/7 support from SOCC like never before. That is an extraordinary increase in improved policing and a focus on enabling our police force to continue to be the best in the country and provide great service.

Let us compare and contrast that with the opposition. We know what it did for policing when it was last in office. It trashed it. The Frontline 2020 model effectively destroyed the capacity of the Western Australia Police Force to solve crimes and respond to and support the community, and it destroyed morale.

By the time we saw the full effect of Frontline 2020 in 2016, police morale had ebbed, the likes of which had probably never been experienced. That was rectified at the time by the Speaker, as Minister for Police, and the former Commissioner of Police Hon Chris Dawson, AC, APM, who went back to a fundamental focus on delivering good policing. This was enabled by current Commissioner Col Blanch through the provision of a State Operations Command Centre and connectivity and applying and adapting technology to deliver better police support. We have seen the benefits. The police resolve crimes like no other place on the planet at the moment. The speed with which they solve crimes is extraordinary. We have not had an unsolved murder in Western Australia in six years. Who was in charge seven years ago? Think about that. Who was in charge then? It has been that long since we had an unsolved murder and that is because of the extraordinary capabilities that our police that have applied to policing. The police service has fundamentally improved and quality policing is now being delivered.

Beyond that, we know what sort of approach opposition members have adopted to crime. They are going to go soft on it. What they are proposing with juvenile detention is extraordinary. Opposition members say that we should shut down unit 18 and put the most serious juvenile offenders in the state back into Banksia Hill Detention Centre and compromise that place, house them in demountables and let them out on the streets to commit crime at a greater rate than ever before. I could not believe it when the Liberal Party adopted that stance, but it has doubled down on it and committed to it. We know now what its stance is. It wants to immediately shut down the ability to house that most serious, complex, challenging and very

often violent cohort, small numbers though it is, in a suitable facility. The Liberal Party wants to end that tomorrow and to let those offenders out on the streets. That is a sad, sad indictment on the Liberal Party.