

POLICE — LAURIE MORLEY — EX GRATIA PAYMENT

Statement

HON COLIN HOLT (South West) [9.00 pm]: In November last year, I asked a question in this house of the minister representing the Minister for Police about an application for an ex gratia payment for a retired police officer, Mr Laurie Morley. The response I got then was that the minister was waiting for advice from the State Solicitor's Office before the government could proceed with it. I made a member's statement on the issue the day after that, about the government pressuring the federal government to make a decision on the Collins-class submarine maintenance contract. The state government pursued an advertising campaign to say to the federal government, "Come on, make a decision because we're waiting for that decision." I used that to tie back to the case of retired police officer Laurie Morley, to say, "Here is the guy who is waiting for a decision from the government." Unlike the state government, he did not have the means to take out a full-page advertisement to say, "Please can you make a decision on my behalf?"

I followed that up with a question last week, again seeking some information about when Mr Laurie Morley can expect a decision from the government. I asked whether the state government had received advice from the State Solicitor's Office. The response from Hon Stephen Dawson, representing the Minister for Police, was —

Mr Morley's many years of service to the Western Australian community are acknowledged and appreciated. The Western Australia Police Force advises that the State Solicitor's Office has provided advice on this matter that cannot be disclosed as it is subject to legal professional privilege.

I have no problem with that. The answer continued —

A decision has not yet been made. Applications such as these are complex and require detailed review and thorough consideration to ensure that comprehensive advice is provided and to ensure that an informed and proper decision can be made.

That sounds like it has come straight out of the federal government's submarine maintenance playbook, and has been repeated by the state government in respect of Mr Morley.

I understand that this matter is complex and I also acknowledge and appreciate Mr Laurie Morley's service to our community, but at some point a decision has to be made. Do you know what? The complexity of this issue is not going to go away. At some point, the minister is going to have to put his head down, get some clarity and make a decision.

I know we have had a change of police minister. Frankly, I did not expect any different from the previous minister because we were coming up to an election. Now the election has come and gone, we have a new police minister who has an opportunity to make this right.

I know Mr Morley very well. He has ongoing medical issues. All he is asking is for the state to not only acknowledge and appreciate his service, but also give him an ex gratia payment that acknowledges and pays for some of the hurt he has suffered. He has been waiting now for two years. I really encourage the minister representing the Minister for Police in this place to take this up.

It is no surprise that there are a few members' statements from retiring members, because there is always unfinished business in this place. The one for me is Laurie Morley from Harvey, who is waiting and waiting. The response we get back from the police is that they want a redress scheme for police officers. This is not a redress scheme for police officers; we are asking for an ex gratia payment in recognition of the injuries Mr Morley sustained while dealing with criminal activity. I just ask the government again to get on with the job of seeking clarity, if that is what it needs, and make a decision on the application by retired police officer Mr Morley for an ex gratia payment. He and his family are waiting. They are trying to get on with their lives, but this would be so much more helpful.

I would love the WA Police Union to take out a full-page advertisement and say, "It's time to make a decision on Mr Morley's case." It is trying to work with the government, too. But should it really come to that? Should a private citizen have to go to that extent to get the government to make a decision?

I am pleading with the minister representing the Minister for Police in this place to go to the Minister for Police, who is a new minister. Here is his opportunity to start off with a great decision for one of their own—one of the people whom the government has acknowledged for his service over 40-odd years—and make things right.

I urge members, if they think there is any doubt about the pain Mr Morley has gone through, to google "Laurie Morley and WA Police Union" and watch the 40-odd minute presentation that he did at the WA Police Union's annual conference, because they will come back convinced that the government needs to make a decision on this matter.

House adjourned at 9.05 pm

