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Hon Matthew Swinbourn MLC
Chair
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Legislative Council Committee Office
Parliament House
4 Harvest Terrace
WEST PERTH WA 6005

Dear Mr Swinbourn

PETITION NO. 118 - YOUTH VIOLENCE IN COCKBURN

Thank you for your letter dated 8 August 2019 regarding Petition No. 118 - Youth Violence in Cockburn, tabled by Hon Simon O'Brien MLC in the Legislative Council on 5 June 2019.

I note the request from the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs for further information and the following advice is provided in response to the questions raised.

Details of the extent of the problem of youth crime in Cockburn, including whether crime has increased significantly in recent years.

Youth crime within Cockburn is largely confined to incidents of anti-social behaviour, retail theft and minor assaults. While some of these incidents have attracted media attention and heightening public awareness, but there has not been a significant increase in youth crime. Cockburn boasts a major shopping centre and public transport services which attract groups of youths to the precinct and can give rise to offending behaviour. Police continue to work with stakeholder groups, including retailers, to create an environment that deters criminal activity and increases public confidence in their safety.

Specific details about increases in police resources and the number of patrols in Cockburn, including:

- (a) whether there have also been any re-alignment of resources in addition to or instead of an increase in resources,
- (b) whether any of the additional 148 police officers will be committed to Cockburn.

District Superintendents are responsible for deploying their allocated resources within their districts to deliver the best possible policing service for their local community. Specific information relating to staffing levels at individual police stations is not released.

In April 2018, I announced details of a significant operational restructure of the Western Australia Police Force. Under the operational restructure, officers in local policing teams and response teams have been amalgamated into one stream as patrol/inquiry officers.

The structure is different and the service delivery model has changed. Police operating from Cockburn Police Station are primarily responsible for their own sub-district, and are available to support outlying police sub-districts if required.

Fremantle District has responded to increased community concerns around youth offending in Cockburn through Operation Insistence which specifically addresses anti-social behaviour at shopping precincts, including Gateways, Beeliar and Phoenix Shopping Centres and surrounds. Banning notices have been used as a strategy to deal with disenfranchised youth.

Cockburn Police Station has not drawn resources from other police stations in order to increase patrols at the shopping centre precinct. However, additional patrols have occurred in the area during Operation Insistence Phase 1, which ran from 2 to 14 April 2019 and involved personnel from Cockburn Police, the Regional Operations Group and the Mounted Section.

As a separate matter, the State Government has allocated funding to fulfil a commitment for 100 additional officers for the Meth Enforcement Action Plan, 25 officers for the Regional Enforcement Unit and 13 extra officers to extend police station opening hours. The State Government, through the budget process, has also allocated funding for 10 officers to address family and domestic violence. These additional positions have been addressed through the WA Police Force recruiting process.

The effectiveness of the measures outlined in the Minister's response and whether they have resulted in a reduction in youth crime in Cockburn

The measures outlined in the Minister's response were the broad parameters of Operation Insistence. This operation delivered a concentrated effort in the problem areas associated with youth offending. The combination of proactive patrols, enforcement, youth diversion and target hardening by retailers and traders has resulted in a measurable decline in reported offences at Gateways Shopping Centre from April through to July 2019. Cockburn Police continue to work with internal and external stakeholder groups to monitor at risk individuals and high harm areas with a view to early intervention and disruption of criminal and anti-social activities.

Feedback on the petitioner's call for a review of the *Young Offenders Act 1994*.

I acknowledge the comments regarding legislation to address juvenile offending, however, questions regarding the operation of the *Young Offenders Act 1994* are more appropriately addressed by the Attorney General.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the petition.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

CHRIS DAWSON
COMMISSIONER OF POLICE

3 September 2019