

LIBERAL–NATIONAL GOVERNMENT — LAW AND ORDER POLICIES

782. Mr A.P. JACOB to the Minister for Police:

Minister, after eight years of the previous Labor government’s soft-on-crime approach, law and order in Western Australia had disintegrated.

Several members interjected.

Mr A.P. JACOB: Can the minister outline to the house what the Liberal–National government has achieved through hard work and sensible policies to restore law and order to this state once again?

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Take a seat minister, please. Quite simply, members, all I want to do is give the call to the Minister for Police.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON replied:

Thank you, Mr Speaker; I appreciate that very much indeed. I thank the member for Ocean Reef for the question—I know he has a very keen interest in law and order.

The member for Ocean Reef is quite right. I think Labor’s approach to law and order in its years of government was not only weak, but also pathetic, and I think the headlines always say it all: “Too soft on crime”—this is criticism of the former Labor government—“State hit over rise in violent crime”; “WA assaults data up 40pc under Labor”; and “Rise in bashings a ‘crime crisis’”. These were some of the headlines in 2007 when the former Labor government was in power, so it was not when it had just come to government; it was when it had almost finished being in government. That is what the headlines were saying about the former Labor government.

Several members interjected.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The problem was, of course, that the former government was not as committed to law and order as our government is. The Liberal–National government is very committed to law and order, and I, as Minister for Police, and the Attorney General have shown our commitment to law and order. I looked at the records, and in the first two years of the member for Midland’s time as police minister—I know she was a late riser and did not like taking calls before 9.00 am, and she was more interested in employing family members in her ministerial office—she brought in five bills! That was her commitment to law and order. The member for Balcatta was better, but not by a great deal. In his first two years as police minister on behalf of a very weak government, he brought in nine bills. What have I done on behalf of this government? I have brought in 16 bills in the first two years.

Several members interjected.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: That is the commitment that our Liberal–National government has towards law and order.

So what did we do? I think those figures speak volumes. I will remind members of a few of the important bills that we brought in. We brought in the Cannabis Law Reform Bill 2009. Why did we do that? Because the former government decriminalised cannabis and allowed people to grow two plants a person, a household—it was almost advocating that people should be smoking the rubbish! It really was! We brought in bills to deal with other drug misuse that covered ice pipes and other drug paraphernalia—we did all of that.

Ms M.M. Quirk interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Girrawheen!

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: We have also brought in bills that legislate for the immediate disqualification of anybody caught driving with a blood alcohol content of .08 and above. Seriously, the former government did nothing about that serious offence in all the years it was in government. We have also introduced tougher penalties for drink and drug–drivers; once again, the former government had done nothing for 15 years to increase the drug and drink–driving penalties. What a commitment it had to the safety of people on our roads!

We brought in the hoon laws and strengthened and lengthened the impoundment period. We fixed the former government’s defunct legislation. We made it fairer so that people would not have their cars impounded if they were innocent.

A member interjected.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: What do the judges think? I am sure they love what we do—it keeps them on their toes!

We have brought in criminal penalty infringement notices and police auxiliary officers. Those were our commitments to law and order and we have almost fulfilled those commitments; there is only one that we have not quite fulfilled yet. I can tell the opposition that we still have more to come—the story is not over; this is just for our first two years. There is one piece of legislation that is still on the notice paper in the upper house.

What else did we do? I came across some comments that actually supported the stop-and-search legislation the other day, and I just want to share them with members. These comments are —

The community expects us to make laws to protect the community and to be mindful of how we can better equip our police to enforce those rules.

...

There is a growing culture in this state in which people are going out for a night on the town expecting trouble and making preparations accordingly. They are armed with the most extraordinary array of dangerous weapons.

...

As the law exists ... police must have a reasonable belief that a person is in possession of a weapon before they can exercise the power to search.

...

The problem is how police can have that belief if weapons such as a machete ... are secreted. This legislation removes the need for police to have that level of suspicion and enables them to search for weapons by way of frisk or metal detector.

...

We must balance the public's right to privacy with the need for greater effective powers for the police.

...

The bill will allow police to search without warrant in certain areas, such as night entertainment areas, gazetted by regulation at specified times, to ascertain whether persons are carrying weapons.

Now, whom do members think those supporting comments are from? They are from the member for Girrawheen! They are her comments that went with her bill, on behalf of the Labor Party, that the whole caucus, including the Leader of the Opposition, supported, until it was rolled by the member for Mindarie. He stands alone in putting public safety at risk in Western Australia.

Several members interjected.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: He made all opposition members backflip—he made the opposition do the biggest group backflip I have ever seen in my life! The Leader of the Opposition listened to nobody; he preferred to listen to the member for Mindarie than somebody with more commonsense—the member for Girrawheen. That was the trouble. He is a very weak leader, and I still have my Christmas card addressed “To Whom it May Concern” because I am not quite sure whether he will still be leader! But what a dearth of talent and character there must be when the member for Mindarie is number three on the list to be a possible leader of the Labor Party.