

CRIME STATISTICS, MEMBER FOR KALGOORLIE

786. Mr D'ORAZIO to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services:

On 12 March, the member for Kalgoorlie cited in the House certain crime statistics that suggested that since this Government was elected, overall crime had risen by 18 per cent, car theft had risen by 32 per cent and burglary had increased by 20 per cent. Can the minister advise whether the member for Kalgoorlie is correct or very bad at maths?

Mrs ROBERTS replied:

I was surprised when I heard those statistics on Tuesday. However, I was not half as surprised as the people in the Police Service, who were incredulous. It is lucky that many of our assistant commissioners were formerly detectives, because some detective work was required to understand how the member came up with those figures. However, the commissioners think that they have worked out the error of his ways. It appears that the member for Kalgoorlie either has incredible trouble with his maths or he set out to deliberately mislead the House. It appears that the member for Kalgoorlie took the number of incidences reported in the month of February this year and compared them with those reported in the single month of January last year.

Mr Birney: No, I did not. Who gave you that information?

Mrs ROBERTS: The assistant commissioner.

Mr Birney: You have it wrong. You were not in government in January last year.

Mrs ROBERTS: What the member did was ridiculous and statistically invalid. He has compared one month with another month. That is the only way he could have got those figures. If the member for Kalgoorlie sticks around in the job long enough, he might learn a few things about crime statistics. One of the things that can be learnt is that in January there is always a spike in the statistics because of the hot weather and the holidays -

Mr Birney: You were in government in February.

Mrs ROBERTS: The member for Kalgoorlie is not listening yet again. The assistant commissioner has advised me that the member has compared the figures for January this year with those for February last year, thus creating this big increase. When that comparison is made, these incredible figures that the member has suggested appear. Probationary constables work out these statistics in a valid way and understand simple things like the explanation for the spike in the figures in January when kids are on school holidays and the like. If the member for Kalgoorlie had been honest to the House, he would have informed it that the difference between the total number of offences -

Mr Barnett: Is that impugning?

Mrs ROBERTS: I know that this is embarrassing for the Leader of the Opposition because he probably approved the member asking such a fallacious question. If members opposite would like to hear what the real figures are, I would be happy to outline them.

Mr Barnett: It obviously depends on which side of House you come from.

Withdrawal of Remark

Mr RIPPER: Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has impugned your handling of your role. He made a comment to the effect that the minister's remarks were impugning the reputation of the member for Kalgoorlie. He used words to the effect that, "It obviously depends on which side of House you sit on." I believe that is a reflection on your role as Speaker.

Mr BARNETT: I withdraw that comment.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Mrs ROBERTS: The difference between the total number of offences recorded in February 2001 and those for February 2002, was 1.7 per cent. The difference between the number of reports of stolen motor vehicles for February 2001 and those for February 2002, was 9.2 per cent. The difference between the number of reports of burglary in February 2001 and those for February 2002, was two per cent. I will tell the House and the member for Kalgoorlie about the clearance statistics that reflect the hard work of our frontline police. Police cleared 10.9 per cent more burglaries between February 2001 and January 2002 than they did in the previous year. The police cleared 13.4 per cent more motor vehicle thefts between February 2001 and January 2002 than they did in the equivalent time in the previous year.

Mr Birney: That does not make sense.

Mrs ROBERTS: It is a percentage figure. I know that is difficult for the member to understand but, unlike him, I was once a maths teacher and if he wishes I can explain it to him afterwards. It is a percentage of the total number.

Mr Birney interjected.

Mrs ROBERTS: It will obviously take some time to convince the member for Kalgoorlie of the error of his ways. If we are dealing with a percentage, it takes into account whether the numbers have gone up or down. Police cleared 5.3 per cent more total offences between February 2001 and January 2002 than they did between February 2000 and January 2001. The member for Kalgoorlie is guilty of knocking the efforts of the police. He should stop running down the police officers of this State with such blatant half-truths. I can only suggest that before he comes into the House again and makes remarks of this kind, he does his homework and that he stop defaming the good work of police officers in this State.

The SPEAKER: I suggest that members be very careful not to impugn fellow members with the language they use and we will all get along much better. Members should be careful with the language they choose to use.