

POLICE — WORKING CONDITIONS

610. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Minister for Police:

With police officers leaving the Western Australia Police Force in the hundreds each month and with the minister's promise to deliver an additional 950 police officers now seeming like a pipedream, I ask the following.

- (1) Does the minister endorse the Commissioner of Police's support for penalty rates for our hardworking police officers to bring them in line with other public servants?
- (2) Does the minister support the police in their calls to establish a switch-off clause in their conditions?

Mr P. PAPALIA replied:

- (1)–(2) I disagree with the premise the member posed at the start of her question. We have committed to growing the Western Australia Police Force by 950 above attrition. That will be 10 times more than members opposite did in the last five years of their time in office, in which time they grew the police force by a net of 95. It is a high target, but the police are resourced to do that. Today—the last time I got the numbers was at the end of September—there are 481 more police officers than when we took office. The police force has grown by 481. Noting there are only about 7 000 of them, that is a pretty significant number.

Next Wednesday or Thursday, I will be going to yet another graduation at the Western Australia Police Academy, at which 50 or so police officers will graduate. I went to a graduation a couple of weeks ago. There is one every month. Right now, there are some 150 officers training at the academy. Only a week ago, the Commissioner of Police was with me at the academy for a jobs expo. Many thousands of people came to view displays and seek information about careers in the police force, and more than 120 applications were made within three days of that expo.

Thanks to many months of work, we have settled on a labour agreement with the federal government, well in advance of every other jurisdiction. As the member would have seen, last weekend we announced a campaign to recruit qualified police officers from New Zealand, Ireland and the United Kingdom. I am pretty confident that we are going to get 950 above attrition because the police are doing such a good job of recruiting. That is their job.

I refer back to the point I made at the start: there are 481 more police officers now than when members opposite were in office. The police force is significantly larger and better equipped than when we came to government. I will not reflect on the leadership, but I will make the observation that we have an excellent police commissioner.

With respect to whether police should be paid more, yes, and they are going to be. That is what the wages case is about and it is what the negotiations are about. We have a wages policy that means they will get paid more. Beyond the wages policy, there is an opportunity to negotiate conditions. I am not involved in that. If the member wants to talk about whether particular issues or subjects for negotiation might be acceptable, she needs to talk to the minister responsible, but I am not that minister.

As far as supporting the police goes, I will make a final observation. I have constantly supported the police. I commend them for the outstanding role they have performed, particularly during the COVID pandemic and subsequently. They have defended the state against COVID and they have continued to provide excellent police services at the same time.