

MANDATORY SENTENCING

185. Mr M.J. COWPER to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services:

I refer to the minister's strong support for the introduction of mandatory sentencing earlier this year, when he said he was absolutely committed to ensuring that people who assault police officers will go to jail, and that mandatory sentences of 12 months, as have occurred recently in some cases, are in his opinion inadequate. He said that far harsher penalties are needed.

- (1) Can the minister now reiterate his support for mandatory sentencing for people found guilty of assaulting a public officer?
- (2) Can the minister guarantee that mandatory sentencing for people found guilty of assaulting police officers will be introduced as a matter of urgency, despite a backflip by some senior police officers?
- (3) What has occurred to cause a backflip on this position?
- (4) Has there been external pressure from non-policing bodies to scrap the plan for mandatory sentencing for people who assault police?

Mr J.B. D'ORAZIO replied:

- (1)-(4) I thank the member for Murray for the question. I reiterate what I have said on this issue from day one. The intention of both sides of the house is to make sure that anyone who assaults police officers whilst they are on duty and causes bodily harm, either to them or any other public officer, needs to be dealt with in a harsh manner. In my opinion that means jail, and that is what I intend to happen. The Commissioner of Police and the Director of Public Prosecutions have come up with a set of proposals that will achieve just that. I am absolutely committed to making sure that people who assault officers and cause bodily harm to those officers while they are carrying out their public duty are dealt with severely. Those recommendations have not come to me yet but they will in due course. I am committed to making sure that we change the law if need be to achieve that outcome. It is in the interests of the whole community that anybody who assaults a police officer and causes bodily harm be dealt with severely. That outcome may be achieved by just changing the processes that are used when these matters are prosecuted. I am waiting for those proposals to come from the DPP. They are just about ready to come to me, and then to government. Discussions between the commissioner and the DPP have taken place over the past month and a half. We on this side of the house are absolutely committed to making sure that people who cause bodily harm to police officers or any other public officers while they are doing their duty will be dealt with severely, and that is the outcome we will achieve.