

METHAMPHETAMINE — USE

126. Ms L. METTAM to the Minister for Police:

I refer to *Report 21: National Wastewater Drug Monitoring Program*, which was released overnight and references a 40 per cent rise in meth on the streets of WA, at 23 per cent above the national average. Will the minister admit that, firstly, Labor's methamphetamine action plan and stop-and-search laws have failed to reduce the use of hard drugs on our streets; secondly, the use of meth will continue to rise under WA Labor now that it does not have the COVID border to hide behind; and, thirdly, WA Labor has failed to deliver on its promise to keep Western Australians safe?

Mr P. PAPALIA replied:

I thank the member for her question. I will answer them all together. The bottom line is what the Premier indicated. Every single year under us, meth consumption in Western Australia has been far lower than it was in the last year under the Liberal government in 2016, when, I remind the member, we saw the blaring front-page headlines "Meth City". It was Perth they were talking about. We led the nation then. The Leader of the Opposition is wrong. Western Australia is not leading the nation in meth consumption. In fact, I think we are third or fourth behind a number of other states with regard to meth. Having said that, meth is a significant threat to Western Australia. It is the drug of choice in this state and it is the one that does so much harm. That is why we have done so much to empower the police to disrupt the organised criminals who bring it here. The Liberal government did not do that.

As the Premier indicated, we have taken a range of measures to empower the police, including the anti-consorting legislation and the toughest anti-insignia legislation in the country, and everyone has seen the disruptive nature of that legislation for the bikies; they are the people. When we talk about organised crime and the distribution of meth in the state, essentially, it is brought in from overseas by people in triads, mafia, cartels and the like and then distributed within Australia, particularly within Western Australia, by outlaw motorcycle gangs. That was confirmed during the COVID pandemic because of the hard borders, the reduction of trafficking into the state and the use of clever intelligence that resulted in some significant disruption. It did show that they are the people behind it. A lot of them are in prison now. It will not go away while we have organised criminals and those gangs. That is why we continue to go after them. We introduced amendments to the Firearms Act a couple of years ago that doubled the penalties for firearms theft and illegal use and also created a thing called a firearms prohibition order, which is essentially for searching without a warrant just about anywhere you want. The police have that; the gang crime squad can do that. When those people are handed one of those things, life gets very uncomfortable.

As the member has referred to, we created legislation to establish 22 search areas around the state—every international land, sea and air arrival point essentially and all the major ones across the land borders—to enable the police, again without a warrant, to conduct searches in prescribed areas. They are initiated and established at short notice with a senior officer based on intelligence. The police have those powers. They will be using them. They have started using those search powers, but they are only in the early days. They will use a range of those powers, and others, to ensure that they work to disrupt and dismantle organised crime gangs and their ability to distribute meth into the state.

It is not a simple thing and there is no single silver bullet. Despite all that, we have done a range of measures that the previous government never even contemplated. I find it a little bit frustrating to be criticised in here for not having yet solved the problem that members opposite looked at for eight and a half years and did nothing about.