

Mr Matt Birney; Ms Sue Walker; Deputy Speaker; Mr Mark McGowan; Acting Speaker; Mrs Michelle Roberts;
Dr Janet Woollard; Mr Bob Kucera; Mr John Hyde; Mr Rob Johnson

PRE-ELECTION PROMISES

Motion

MR M.J. BIRNEY (Kalgoorlie) [4.06 pm]: I move -

That this House notes with grave concern that this State Labor Government has failed to fully deliver on 60 per cent of its pre-election policing promises.

And, further, that this House recognises that Western Australians have lost confidence in the State Labor Government and its ability to provide for them a safe and secure living environment.

At the conclusion of my contribution to this debate I will have proved conclusively and irrefutably that this Labor Government has failed to implement 60 per cent of its written pre-election policies. I will do so by quoting facts and figures and providing many references that members can look up for themselves if they are not convinced by what I am saying.

When going into an election, all politicians and members of political parties attempt to engage the feeling of the community and the electorate and try to reflect that feeling in their policies. It is one thing for a Government to reflect that strength of feeling in its policies, but it is another thing to carry it through. Many Western Australians will be bitterly disappointed when they see the case I am about to make, because it will show that this Labor Party has no intention of implementing some of its policies, has not implemented others and will not implement some of its written pre-election policies. Members of the Labor Party cannot keep going to the people with these flash documents - they are pieces of paper only - advocating certain policing or law and order policies, and when in government absolutely ignore more than half of those promises - 60 per cent to be precise.

I think the biggest furphy members would be aware of is the furphy about the Government increasing police numbers by 250 police officers above and beyond the attrition rate. That was a major plank of the Labor Party's pre-election platform. The punters in Western Australia could be forgiven for thinking this mob would put an extra 250 police officers on the beat. They could probably even be forgiven for casting their votes for the Labor Party based on that single promise. However, the reality is very much different, and I will prove it to members. I draw members' attention to the 2001 annual report for the Western Australia Police Service, which shows us that there were 4 993 police officers in Western Australia at the start of the Labor Party's first full financial year in government - that is, from 1 July 2001. Hon Derrick Tomlinson, who shows considerable interest in matters of law and order, asked a minister in the upper House how many sworn police officers there were in Western Australia as at 31 July 2003. The answer was 5 031. That is an increase of only 38 police officers, after the Government has been in office for more than two years. Thirty-five extra officers is a far cry from 250. To be fair, the figures for the month prior to that, which are recorded in the 2003 annual report, show an increase of 70 police officers. That is still a far cry from 250; nonetheless, it is an extra 70 extra officers.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: That is 70 extra officers from midyear, because we engaged officers between the election and 30 June 2001. You cannot even work that out.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: I am getting to that. The Minister for Police is running around telling people that the Labor Party has provided funding for additional police officers. Between 11 February 2001, which was the date of the state election, until 30 June 2001, 40 or 50 extra police officers were put on the beat in Western Australia. They were provided for by a Liberal Government and had been budgeted for under a Liberal budget, which had been put in place the year before. This minister has the hide to tell the public that this Government has provided the funding for those extra 40 or 50 police officers when they were clearly provided for under the last Liberal budget. What an embarrassment. A Labor minister had to rely on the last Liberal budget to make ends meet to sell the message she sent to the people of Western Australia. Let us be clear about that. Some 40 or 50 police officers were provided for in the last Liberal budget between the election day and 30 June 2001.

The Labor Party's first opportunity to increase police numbers in this State came about on 1 July 2001 when it introduced its first budget. From that date until 31 July 2003, for which the latest set of public figures is provided, there has been an increase of just 38 police officers. That is a far cry from 250. I think members will agree that the Labor Party has indeed failed on that account.

I refer to the Labor Party's "more police, better policing" executive summary, which was the Holy Grail for the Labor Party going into the last election. It contains 15 dot points, all of which represent an election promise. It becomes abundantly clear that at the very least, nine of the 15 election promises have been abandoned altogether. Another two or three are dubious, but at least nine have been abandoned. I will go through them one by one. I will even admit to the two or three that have been implemented, just to give a fair and reasonable account of the state of play. The first dot point refers to the extra 250 police officers, which I have dealt with conclusively.

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Mrs M.H. Roberts: We are not even up to four years yet. Your point is that we have not delivered 250 extra police officers and it has not even been three years.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: Dot point two relates to five new police flying squads. I refer to the Labor Party's pre-election promise, which states that the Labor Party will -

- establish five new police 'Flying Squads' as a strong and pro-active policing force to complement the existing area commands. These quick response squads will target crime hot spots and combat emerging crime patterns and anti-social problems;

Mrs M.H. Roberts: Why do you not quote Deputy Commissioner Brennan from the estimates?

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: People who live in one of those crime hot spots just might have voted for the Labor Party because the Labor Party told them it would do something about crime. It said it would introduce five new police flying squads to deal with that problem. Guess what? It did not, and it has no intention of doing that.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: Why do you not talk about the 7.3 per cent decrease in crime?

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: That was borne out by the question I posed to the minister during the budget Estimates Committee on 29 May 2002, when the minister said that at that point there were no flying squads by the name of flying squads. There were none and there will not be any; it will not happen. All the people who live in those crime hot spots who were concerned about the level of crime -

Mrs M.H. Roberts interjected.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: I only wish the attendants would close the windows at night because it appears that a crow has flown in. I know it is here because I can hear it screeching. Perhaps you can have a word with the attendants, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr P.D. Omodei interjected.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: I thank the member for Warren-Blackwood. I will move on because I have made my point about dot point two of the Labor Party's "more police, better policing" policy. I know that the Minister for Police does not want to hear this. It is like extracting teeth. She is saying, "Oh, I forgot all about that one. I was hoping that nobody would realise".

Mrs M.H. Roberts: It is utter rubbish. I would be embarrassed. I have never seen any member of Parliament put out such a nonsense press release.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: As I refer to the dot points on the list, I can hear my friend the Minister for Police becoming increasingly disturbed. I am fully aware of the reason for that. Dot point three is a good one. I am sure the minister will like it.

Mrs M.H. Roberts interjected.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: The minister knows all about that one. Dot point three states that Labor will -

- ensure that all police stations are staffed to their authorised strengths;

Mrs M.H. Roberts: We have provided more than enough officers for that.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: That is an interesting comment, particularly in light of the document that I pretty much forced the Minister for Police to table a month or two ago that tells us that 11 of the 14 police districts in Western Australia were operating below their authorised strength as at 31 August 2003. Eleven of the 14 policing districts were down, despite the Labor Party's written pre-election policy that it will ensure that every police station is operating at its authorised strength.

I will refer to a couple of the districts. The mid west Gascoyne has an authorised strength of 204 police officers, but it had only 190.5 officers. The goldfields-Esperance, which is dear to my heart, has an authorised strength of 201 police officers, but it had just 191 officers at that date. The south metropolitan area should have had 386 police officers, but had only 372 at that date.

Mrs M.H. Roberts interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Police.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: The west metropolitan area should have had 297 police officers, but it had only 292. What is the member for Warren-Blackwood's district? I will take a chance and play roulette.

Mr P.D. Omodei: The south west district.

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Mr M.J. BIRNEY: My friend the member for Warren-Blackwood should have 211 police officers in his district; in fact, he had only 205 at that time. I could pick just about any district and be confident that it is operating below its authorised strength. To be fair to my friend the minister, the policy states that the Labor Party will ensure that all police stations - not necessarily districts - will be staffed to their authorised strength. I thought, okay, if the Labor Party is going to put that on paper, I will find out whether it has stuck to that promise. Therefore, on 18 September this year, I asked the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, in question on notice 1685: will the minister advise the percentage of police stations in Western Australia that were operating below their authorised strength as at 31 May 2003? That was a pretty straightforward question - one that I derived from the Labor Party's "more police, better policing" policy. The response from the Minister for Polices was a bit comical. She said-

The Police Service advise that due to operational sensitivities, specific information relating to staffing levels of individual police stations will not be provided.

How will we ever know whether the Labor Party has kept its promise? The Labor Party said in that policy document that Labor will -

- ensure that all police stations are staffed to their authorised strengths;

However, when I asked the minister whether that promise has been kept, she said she could not tell me; the information was operationally sensitive. Madam Deputy Speaker, I need some protection from this babbling person on my left, because I have some very important points to make. The reality is that I had not asked the Minister for Police about the authorised strength of each individual police station. I had asked the minister to give me a broad-brush outlook on what percentage of police stations were operating below their authorised strength so that I could see whether the Labor Party had kept its promise. However, the Minister for Police would not answer me. That in itself is strange enough. What is even stranger is that when I had asked the minister the same question a year prior to that, the minister had said that less than 15 per cent of police stations were operating below their authorised strength. Therefore, two years ago, the Minister for Police was prepared to give me the figure, but this year, when an election is in the wind, it has suddenly become a matter of operational sensitivity. If that is not politics in its rawest form, I am not sure what is. This will take a while, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I hope you will indulge me, because I am up to only dot point three out of 15 that I want to go through.

I am sure the minister is well aware that dot point four states that Labor will -

- work to identify more areas where civilian staff can be used for non-police duties;

Mrs M.H. Roberts interjected.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: Is there any oxygen on the minister's planet at all? I will move on, because I know that members are very interested to hear this. The Labor Party picked up on a bit of public sentiment with regard to dot point four, because that was a fairly strong issue at the time, so we would expect that it would have delivered on that promise as well. However, at page 758 of the *Budget Statements* for 2002-03 we find a very small line - it is so small that we would miss it if we blinked - that states "Police Unsworn Redundancies" and gives an amount of \$1.6 million split up into four amounts of \$400 000 over four years. Members may not understand what that means, so I will explain it. What it means is that the Labor Government is making redundant civil servants who are working in police stations, despite the fact that dot point four states that it will work to identify more areas where civilian staff can be used for non-police duties. It is hard to get civilian staff to do that when it is making them redundant and it has provided \$1.6 million for their redundancy packages. Let us see whether the Labor Party's redundancy package has been working. The latest police annual report tells us that, as at 30 June 2001, 1 325 unsworn staff were working for the WA Police Service. At the end of the financial year that has just gone, there were 1 284 unsworn staff, so the Government has shed 41 of those people. Therefore, far from working to identify areas where more civilian staff can be located, the Labor Party has been axing civilian staff and is paying \$1.6 million for that privilege. Therefore, dot point four is also defunct. I am sure we will soon get to a dot point on which the Labor Party has actually kept its promise.

Dot point five is also interesting. It states that Labor will -

- investigate new and flexible ways to improve recruitment to the Police Service and increase retention levels;

Let us see whether that has happened. Let us see whether the retention levels in the Western Australia Police Service have improved since this funny little mob came into power. Question on notice 1488, which was asked by my friend Hon Alan Cadby of the minister representing the Minister for Police in the upper House, was can the minister advise how many sworn police officers have left the Western Australia Police Service between

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certain dates, and it outlined those dates. The first date was between 1 July 2000 and 30 June 2001. The answer to that part of the question was that 170 police officers had left the Police Service. In the following year, 170 police officers also left the Police Service. In the following year - the financial year that has just expired - 186 police officers left the Police Service. Therefore, far from dot point five of the Labor Party's pre-election policy being achieved, attrition rates have increased. More police officers are leaving the Police Service every year. I am not guessing or surmising. That is the answer that was provided by the Minister for Police to that question that was asked in the upper House. Dot point five has also gone by the wayside.

We now get to dot point six. I am going weak at the knees; I have finally found a dot point that the Labor Party may actually have achieved. Dot point six states that Labor will -

- boost the police operations budget . . .

I believe that has happened to a certain extent, but, sadly, a lot of that money has been gobbled up by the police computer system and has not been translated into front-line policing. However, it is my intention to be fair and reasonable throughout this debate and to outline the facts, so I must say that I think the Labor Party has probably increased the police budget to some extent. However, the other part of dot point six states that -

Clear targets for all police response times will be set and patrolling will be restored as key police work.

Presumably that was, once again, in response to the strength of public opinion that the police cannot, or do not, respond to crime quickly enough. Let us see whether Labor has done that. Sadly, the Labor Party has been a bit tricky with that dot point. I know you will find that difficult to believe, Madam Deputy Speaker, but it has been a bit tricky, because when I questioned the Minister for Police about this matter during the budget estimates hearings, the minister said that the Police Service, not the Government, sets the response times. The Labor Party went to the election saying that Labor will set clear targets for all police response times. However, when I questioned the Government about that very issue, the Minister for Police said that the Police Service, not the Government, sets the response times. What was the point of going to the election with this rubbish document that states that Labor will set clear targets for all police response times when the Minister for Police has indicated clearly that the police set their own response times? Once again, dot point six is a failed promise in this "more police, better policing" defunct Labor policy.

Dot point seven is also interesting. It states that Labor will -

- increase support for the Mounted and Canine sections of the Police Service by \$1.4 million over four years; and encourage a more visible police presence in the suburbs and country towns.

I will come to the \$1.4 million in a moment. I will deal first with the issue of more mounted police units in country towns. One of the country towns that was due to receive a permanent mounted police unit under the Labor Party's policy was my own country town of Kalgoorlie. It was a welcome initiative on the part of the Labor Party, and I think I said so at the time. Kalgoorlie has a number of suburbs which, because of the antisocial behaviour of some people, lend themselves to innovative policing methods, one of which is the mounted police unit. What do you think happened, Madam Deputy Speaker, a year to a year and a half after the election? I asked myself whatever happened to the mounted unit that the Minister for Police promised my electorate of Kalgoorlie. She had abandoned it. She told the *Kalgoorlie Miner* that the Labor Government would not be doing it and that there would be no mounted police unit for Kalgoorlie. It was another broken promise. The minister did not even try to slip in and slip out of the issue; she simply said that she was sorry, there would be no police unit and that she did not mean it. Guess what, we did not get one.

When dealing with police horses, dogs and the like, that \$1.4 million is a significant amount of money which would have had a serious impact on the ground for front line crime fighting. Let us see whether the Government did that. My good friend Hon Alan Cadby asked the minister in the other House -

What was the total funding allocated to the mounted and canine sections of the Police Service in the following years -

- (a) 2001-02;
- (b) 2002-03; and
- (c) 2003-04?

The answer was -

- (a) 2001-02, \$504 400;
- (b) 2002-03, \$611 100; and
- (c) 2003-04, \$605 900.

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That is an increase of about \$100 000, despite the Labor Party's pre-election promise that it would increase the amount by \$1.4 million. How could the Labor Party get away with trotting out such rubbish to the people of Western Australia, knowing full well that it would never be the case? The minister did not know where she would get the money from. She did not even know if she could get the money, yet she wrote that promise in this rubbish, defunct document. The promise was \$1.4 million; the delivery was \$100 000. That is absolutely ludicrous.

Dot point nine of the Labor Party's defunct "more police, better policing" document states that the Labor Party will establish a child abuse unit, an Asian squad, a sexual assault squad and a motor dealers unit. A swinging voter going into the last election who fitted into one of those broad categories of victims might just bring himself to vote for the Labor Party. A victim or somebody who knew a victim of child abuse might vote for a party that would introduce a child abuse unit. If they knew somebody in the motor trade who had become a victim, they might vote for a party that would introduce a motor dealers unit. Sexual assault is a considerable problem in Western Australia. A victim of sexual assault would probably have voted for this mob if it put this little document under that person's nose and said that it would introduce a sexual assault squad. Where are those squads? What has happened to them? They have not materialised except in the form of black ink on this piece of paper. The Western Australian Labor Party did not introduce these measures, yet they put them to paper.

Mr J.L. Bradshaw: I have a dog at home they could have.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: The member for Murray-Wellington has very kindly and very generously offered his dog to the WA Police Service in the knowledge that it is short of funds for that particular unit. Dot point 10 of the policy document states that the Labor Party will -

- establish a Youth Division within the Police Service, and work towards a more effective inter-agency approach on juvenile crime.

I could not find a youth division that had been introduced by the Labor Party. Of course, juvenile crime continues to be a significant and serious problem, particularly in country areas. One of those people who thought that juvenile crime was a serious issue might have voted for the Labor Party when he read this rubbish, especially if he was a swinging voter or a soft Liberal or Labor voter. That promise has not materialised. I hope that members are starting to get my drift.

Mr B.K. Masters: Have you any more examples? I could listen to them all day.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: I have some more. Because I am being fair and reasonable and trying to give an accurate account to members, I will say that the Labor Party has half carried out its promise at dot point 11. The Labor Party said that it would introduce comprehensive legislation to control and regulate the sex industry. Technically it did introduce the legislation, but where is it now? It has sunk. It is at the bottom of the river somewhere or, I suspect, at the bottom of the Minister for Police's drawer. Yes, she technically introduced it, but what happened to it? It ran right off the rails and into the bush, never to be seen again. Because I am a fair and reasonable commentator, I am prepared to say that the Labor Party half carried out the promise at dot point 11.

I have found one promise that the Labor Party actually carried out. At dot point 12 it said that it would introduce appropriate DNA legislation.

Mr R.F. Johnson: We had already put it in place.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: Let us not detract from it. The Labor Party did that one.

Mr J.L. Bradshaw: There is a case in Pinjarra in which DNA testing has taken so long that the suspect has died.

Mr M.J. BIRNEY: That is another issue. The member for Murray-Wellington can rest assured that I will be raising that issue at the appropriate time. Let us try to be generous and a little bit statesmanlike and acknowledge the policies at the one or two dot points out of the 15 that the Labor Party did introduce. They are now coming thick and fast. The second to last dot point states that the Labor Party will introduce a modern Police Act. Whatever happened to that? Where is the modern Police Act? I have to give that promise a cross because we have neither seen nor heard anything about a modern Police Act. I support the concept of modernising the Police Act. The Police Act contains many provisions that make reference to past errors, perhaps at the turn of the century or whenever. It will not come as any surprise to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, or to other members that it did not happen.

I could go on for quite some time, but I know the Minister for Police is particularly disturbed about the facts, figures and irrefutable evidence that I have presented to the Parliament today. That has been reflected in her constant and, may I say, annoying interjections on my speech. Nonetheless, I have ploughed on through my speech and, I believe, I have made a very strong case in favour of this motion. If any members of the Labor Party are prepared to refute the very strong facts and figures that I have presented to them, I will welcome the

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opportunity to cross-examine them. Sadly, I do not think that too many of them will do that. I am sure that the Minister for Police will jump to her feet, give me a jolly good shellacking and twist and turn and slip and slide to the point at which nobody will know what she is saying in an attempt to create a smokescreen to cover up her appallingly bad record as Minister for Police.

I leave you with one thought, Madam Deputy Speaker: election promises are very important and often influence the way people vote. Members forget that point. Election promises are the subject of ongoing debate, and swinging voters are influenced by these promises. When members opposite tell people they will do these 15 things, people expect them to be done. Members opposite could be forgiven with the prostitution legislation matter because it did not receive the support of opposing political parties. In the interests of fairness, I outline that aspect to the House. However, every one of the policies bar one or two contained in the Labor Party's "More Police, Better Policing" policy have been abandoned or half-done. That is an indictment on the Labor Party. Rest assured that as we move into the next electoral cycle and towards the next election, I will ensure that the people of Western Australia are fully briefed on this matter and are aware that the Labor Party has reneged on 60 per cent of its policies set out before the last election.

MS S.E. WALKER (Nedlands) [4.41 pm]: I follow the superb speech from the member for the Kalgoorlie. I did not think I could beat it, but I found an article today that may beat it; it will certainly make the minister cringe. I have seen her cringe, but wait until I tell members about the situation at Roebourne Regional Prison. I note that the motion reads -

That this House notes with grave concern that this State Labor Government has failed to fully deliver on 60 per cent of its pre-election policing promises.

And further, that this House recognises that Western Australians have lost confidence in the State Labor Government and its ability to provide for them a safe and secure living environment.

I come to this motion from two sides. I approach it from the point of view of the justice portfolio and on the basis of some files that have languished in my office for months awaiting a response from the minister. The people of Western Australia are not confident that the community is safe. Labor's pre-election commitment to "Making Our Community Safer" reads -

The Court Government has failed. It doesn't have the answers to deal with the crime problem, or the growing problem of drug abuse.

Nor does it have the answers to deal with the high rate of juvenile re-offending. . . .

People are demanding that the government turn these figures around. Working to achieve this goal is a key priority for a Labor Government.

This means being proactive about tackling crime, rather than reactive. It means focussing on finding the causes of crime and anti-social behaviour, and developing preventive strategies to address these problems, not just reacting to the consequences of failure.

How many times have I raised in the House that four prisons in this State are on the verge of imminent failure? How often have I asked the minister to respond to questions on prisons, particularly regarding programs for women and the state of prisons in Western Australia? How many times has she been evasive? I read to Parliament an article from the *Pilbara News* dated 26 November 2003 with the headline "Prison worst in State". Could any prison be worse than Hakea, which was recorded as being the unhappiest prison in the State? Members should listen to this article -

State's prisons inspector says Roebourne jail is dirty, unhygienic, impoverished and under resourced.

. . .

Conditions at Roebourne Regional Prison have come under attack from the State's independent prisons inspector.

Inspector of custodial services Richard Harding was scathing in his criticism of this facility when he visited Roebourne jail recently.

"Roebourne prison is the most impoverished in the State in terms of human resources and expenditure," Mr Harding said.

The prison was dirty and unhygienic, staff were slack in their attitudes and Mr Harding said it was disappointing that the prison had not improved markedly since his last inspection of April last year.

I raised this matter some months ago because it was important. In this year's annual report of the Inspector of Custodial Services, Professor Harding referred to his recommendations and outlined how many had been

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accepted by the Government and whether any had been implemented. As a result of my visit to Broome Regional Prison, I highlighted that eight women were not receiving proper rehabilitation services. The Government's pre-election policy of making the community safer could be implemented through programs to rehabilitate prisoners. This situation is disgusting and it is an indictment on the minister. The inspector has spoken again about the Roebourne prison in this way. He went on in the article -

"When I looked at the prison 19 months ago I was very unhappy with the state it was in," he said.

What has the Government been doing? That was 19 months ago. The media in this State seem to think that the Minister for Health is a superb performer. However, the media should look at the state in which he left the prison system. It is a disgrace. He now has been given the health portfolio! The inspector further said -

The most critical deficit at the prison was the lack of offender and rehabilitation programs.

Pilbara News last week revealed Roebourne prisoners were denied access to a re-entry coordination program to help them settle into the community upon their release . . .

What does the minister say about that? It is disgusting.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: I will answer in my own time.

Ms S.E. WALKER: I do not want to hear the minister, when she gets up, be evasive or tell us how caring she is and how she speaks from the heart about these people. The inspector told us that this prison is filthy and unhygienic and has no programs. The article continues -

. . . Mr Harding said that there were few programs at all available and prisoners had to be sent to metropolitan prisons for rehabilitation.

What a disgrace!

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Police will come to order!

Ms S.E. WALKER: The article further reads -

"Roebourne prison needs to be at the centre of the Department of Justice's radar . . .

There is nothing on the radar relating to prisons, according to the minister. He said that more resources are needed. I have been asking why women in Broome Regional Prison have not been getting basic resources.

Ms M.M. Quirk interjected.

Ms S.E. WALKER: Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to the member for Girrawheen! All year she has had a go at me, but she has never had the courage to get out of her seat to speak about women in this State. She sits there and carps. She should get up and help women in this State.

The article continues -

The Department of Justice defended the facility and said more that \$2 million had been spent at the jail in the past 18 months to address the issues raised . . .

If \$2 million was spent, and it is still filthy, unhygienic, impoverished and under-resourced, my goodness, what are they doing in that department? What is the minister doing? The article continues -

Burup MLA Fred Riebeling said spending more money on prisoners was not always popular with the electorate but it was important to improve access to rehabilitation programs.

The Speaker, as the local member, said that money should be spent on programs. Instead, the Government is accumulating money for that stupid railway. The article further reads -

"That prisoners are not getting access to these programs is unacceptable," Mr Riebeling said.

What an indictment on the minister. The Speaker's comments continued -

He said violent prisoners and especially those likely to re-offend needed rehabilitation and the State was obliged to fund the programs.

The Government is not funding the programs. I went to Broome Regional Prison and it is disgraceful. Not many people go inside prisons in this State.

Mr R.C. Kucera interjected.

Ms S.E. WALKER: The minister was a disgrace as Minister for Health - he should pipe down!

Mr R.C. Kucera: Where did you stay in Broome - Cable Beach?

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Ms S.E. WALKER: If I were the minister, and I had performed as the minister has done, I would be ashamed of myself.

I hold up the front page article in the *Pilbara News*. The prison is filthy, unhygienic, impoverished and under-resourced. It is disgraceful.

I speak to this motion on behalf of my constituents and the performance of the Minister for Police relating to my constituents. I refer to an elderly lady constituent, firstly, who wrote to me; on 20 May, I wrote to the minister on that matter. I will go through a couple of these letters. I received a call from a concerned constituent who lives in Claremont about an inability to contact police on the Sunday her car was broken into outside a Nedlands church. She informed me that she telephoned the number outside the Nedlands Police Station, 131 444, which had a variety of messages but which asked her to call 9222 1111. She called the latter number and the person who answered said that she would be put through to her region. She was returned to the switchboard of 9222 1111. She then tried to contact her local police station at Claremont but was put through to central police. She has told me that throughout these phone calls she was constantly told to "use but not abuse 000". She found herself going around in circles and could not get the police to respond to her. She spoke to the police on Monday morning, feeling quite vulnerable that a crime had been committed against her and she could not obtain a police response right away. At the time - this is important - the person who broke into her car took papers that showed her personal details and also the control for her garage door. Members will appreciate that she felt vulnerable and did not want her name to be bandied about. On 20 May 2003 I asked the minister to explain the current systems in place for constituents. I wrote again to the minister on 7 July, 10 September and 27 August. In the end I wrote to the Premier. Despite having written to Hon Michelle Roberts, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, I wrote to the Premier in September - five months after my first letter - requesting a response to my original correspondence of 20 May about a constituent's concern about her inability to contact police etc. As the matter was almost four months old by that stage, I asked the Premier to direct the minister to respond to my letter, and he did. The minister eventually wrote to me on 27 October - I wrote on 20 May - saying that the police did not know much about the case. The police had contacted the minister. I did not give the lady's name, because she was concerned about that, but I gave the minister the address and the details of the offence. I know that the police would have recorded that. I know police procedure. All the minister did was write me a long, wordy letter that said that without the name of the complainant and the exact location of the offence, the police were unable to ascertain exactly what occurred.

It is not good enough for a minister to take from May to October to respond to a letter. However, that is not the first time it has happened. I refer to an e-mail I received from Mr Jeremy Sher on 3 October 2003, following a conversation I had with him when I asked him to put his experience in writing to me. His e-mail states -

Dear Sue

...

Several weeks ago, I returned to my parked car at UWA to find a large scratch and dent on my rear bumper. Fortunately, a witness had left a note including the registration number of the person who damaged my car. I decided to find a police station so I could find out the details of the person who damaged my car. I visited Nedlands (which referred you to Subiaco), Leederville (which told you to come back the next day) North Perth (which referred you to Leederville!) police stations. All stations were closed after 4pm (it was 4.30pm). I could not believe that there was not a single police station nearby which was open after 4pm. Suffice it to say, that I checked on the Internet to discover that there was no 24 hour police station between Fremantle, Mirrabooka and Curtin House in the city.

The next day I visited the Nedlands police station on The Avenue to report the offence and was told that police station was being closed down and it was the intention of the State Government to combine all police services in Subiaco.

On a completely unrelated matter, my mother had to visit North Perth police station. There she found a notice stating that all police had been sent to the Royal Show and the station would reopen on Tuesday 7 October. The question really has to be asked if the other stations were also closed, who was providing police services to the residents and businesses in North Perth, Mt Hawthorne and Menora? In addition, the North Perth police station was built in 1909 and does not seem to have been renovated much since then.

He goes on to refer to the inner metropolitan police services and advises me that he hopes this is of some assistance. I promised him that I would raise the issue in Parliament and I have because it is an indictment on what is happening in the western suburbs.

Mr Matt Birney; Ms Sue Walker; Deputy Speaker; Mr Mark McGowan; Acting Speaker; Mrs Michelle Roberts;
Dr Janet Woollard; Mr Bob Kucera; Mr John Hyde; Mr Rob Johnson

I turn to another complaint from a constituent. I will give the minister the reference number; it is 11-17217. I will not read out this letter but it concerned a complaint about the Western Australia Police Service crime investigation support forensic document examination section. I wrote this letter on 8 October and have not yet received a response. I do not believe I have received an acknowledgment. That is one of the better cases.

People in Western Australia and in my electorate are not feeling safe, secure or confident about the WA Police Service and they are not feeling confident that this Government is providing the responses that I ask for on their behalf. The Labor policy document to which the member for Kalgoorlie referred states that people want to feel safe and secure in their homes and in their communities and that that is a key priority for a Gallop Labor Government. Australian Bureau of Statistics figures for 2000 show that Western Australia continued to suffer from the nation's highest rate of unlawful entry, including home burglary and other theft offences. Police officers are at the front line in dealing with criminal and antisocial behaviour. They must be properly resourced to do the job. A constituent of mine has no confidence in the system. I have just spoken to him on the telephone and I asked him whether he would mind if I read out his letter. I am not one to give the Attorney General any stars in this place, but I want to show members how long he took to respond to my correspondence about this matter and the fact that I have not received a response from the Minister for Police.

Mr R.F. Johnson: He is normally very good in responding.

Ms S.E. WALKER: Okay.

Mr R.F. Johnson: He may not be in other areas, but he is in responding.

Mr M.J. Birney: As a matter of interest, I spoke to one of his constituents in Fremantle the other day and was told that since Jim McGinty has become a pop star, he has forgotten about his electorate.

Ms S.E. WALKER: He is not very popular in his electorate, and I know because I have been there. Members should listen to this letter; it is important. It is from a businessman who lives in Nedlands and has a big business in Balcatta. It states -

Dear Sue,

I am like most of the people in Australia - we do not like or agree with a lot of things that are happening in the Country these days, but we don't do anything about it, because we don't feel that the powers that are running the Country are really listening to public opinion.

Alternately, if they claim they are listening, they are certainly doing nothing constructive about it.

Mr R.C. Kucera interjected.

Ms S.E. WALKER: The minister should worry about the testimony he is going to give.

Mr J.N. Hyde interjected.

Ms S.E. WALKER: I look after my constituents, as well as those of the member for Perth. The letter continues -

However, an event that has just occurred has left me feeling really angry and frustrated at what is happening in our legal system.

For years, the public have been very vocal in their disgust at the leniency that is shown to criminals in the courts. Constantly people are given such light punishments for carrying out criminal activities. There is no deterrent, so these criminals are left on our streets to continue their criminal activity and the crime rate continues to climb every year.

The Courts and the Government seem to be intent on showing leniency to those that commit crimes, but totally ignore the basic rights of those against whom the crimes are committed.

And dare we raise a hand to defend our properties and families!!!!

The reason that has prompted me to write to you is because I have now had first hand experience of the courts showing total lack of understanding about what the public are crying out for.

I run a small business in Balcatta. On the 13th August 2002, our premises were forcibly broken into and the thieves stole 36 brand new compressors, with a wholesale value of around \$15,000, and a retail value of around \$25,000.

The compressors are fairly big, so whoever stole them came with a large truck to take them away.

The matter was reported to the police.

Extract from *Hansard*

[ASSEMBLY - Wednesday, 3 December 2003]

p14089a-14106a

Mr Matt Birney; Ms Sue Walker; Deputy Speaker; Mr Mark McGowan; Acting Speaker; Mrs Michelle Roberts;
Dr Janet Woollard; Mr Bob Kucera; Mr John Hyde; Mr Rob Johnson

After a few days after, I had a call from Morley Police Station advising me that they had stopped a utility the previous night on a routine traffic matter, and found 6 compressors in the back of the utility, all brand new and still in their boxes.

The police held onto the compressors and, once I had provided them with the serial numbers of the stolen compressors, confirmed that the compressors that they had found on the utility were part of the stolen batch.

[Leave granted for the member's time to be extended.]

Ms S.E. WALKER: The letter continues -

The driver of the utility, -

I will not name him -

told the police that he didn't know anything about them being stolen and was purely a courier for one of the courier carriers around Perth.

The police subsequently made enquiries with that courier company who advised the police that they had never heard of -

This person -

and such a person had never been in their employment.

As described to me by the police, -

This person -

went to ground" but when they did get to him again, he admitted to them that he did know the goods were stolen. However, the police advised me that he refused to divulge who he had received the goods from . . .

It goes on to say -

The matter finally got to court . . . The case was heard in the Perth Court of Petty Sessions, where -

This person -

was charged with receiving stolen goods.

He was found guilty and the punishment handed down by the court was a \$500 fine!!!!

The police were so disappointed . . . that they actually rang . . . If they had not rung, I would never have known what had happened.

He says he is totally outraged by the sentence.

Mrs M.H. Roberts interjected.

Ms S.E. WALKER: I am telling the minister how this businessman feels and that he has written to me and I cannot get a response from this minister. The letter continues -

Although he admitted guilty to receiving stolen goods, I would have assumed that the courts would take a strong line against somebody who refused to name -

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs D.J. Guise): Order! I have allowed a fair bit of latitude, but the member is reading a lengthy document and the idea is that it should be limited to a few lines. If the member could paraphrase, it would be helpful.

Ms S.E. WALKER: I take your point, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The point is that this businessman wanted me to write to the Attorney General and the police and put this issue to them. I did write to the Attorney General and to the minister on 14 October, and I received a response from the Attorney General on 28 October. I received a response from the minister's office on 31 October to say that she had received the letter, but I have not received anything else.

The public does not have any confidence in this Government, and my constituents do not have any confidence in this minister - she never responds. I do not have any confidence in the minister in relation to prisons - nobody does - except the people on the other side of the Chamber who say nothing.

Mr J.N. Hyde: She has cut crime by 20 per cent in Nedlands.

Ms S.E. WALKER: We do not have much crime in Nedlands.

Mr Matt Birney; Ms Sue Walker; Deputy Speaker; Mr Mark McGowan; Acting Speaker; Mrs Michelle Roberts;
Dr Janet Woollard; Mr Bob Kucera; Mr John Hyde; Mr Rob Johnson

Mr R.F. Johnson: The lone ranger!

Ms S.E. WALKER: Yes, the lone ranger. I can provide the reference number to the last letter I sent to the minister on 10 September on behalf of a constituent, but I did not receive a response.

Mr R.F. Johnson: In September?

Ms S.E. WALKER: Yes, in September. I received an acknowledgment, reference number 11/16746. If responses to all these files are floating around in the stratosphere - there is another one that I have not raised - I would love to have them. This minister is the worst minister I have had to deal with, and that is the evidence. What more can I say?

I want to leave members with the words, which appeared in a newspaper article, about the State's prisons being dirty, unhygienic, impoverished and under-resourced. I do not think it will make any difference to this Government, because four prisons - three of which house maximum security prisoners - have been in a state of crisis for the past couple of years and nothing has been done, and to make matters worse an atrocious headline appeared in the newspaper. How can the people in this State have any confidence in the Labor Party making the community safer, which was its election policy? I support the member for Kalgoorlie's motion.

MR M. McGOWAN (Rockingham - Parliamentary Secretary) [5.04 pm]: I oppose the motion moved by the member for Kalgoorlie and supported by his colleague the member for Nedlands - the young guns of the Liberal Party. It is always interesting to follow the young guns of the Liberal Party. The member for Nedlands cannot speak without quoting herself. Most of her speeches comprise her quoting herself. As time goes by we will find the member for Nedlands quoting herself quoting herself, until in about 10 years, if she gains preselection, she will not be able to say anything that we have not heard many, many times before. The member for Nedlands always has to read her speech and quote herself.

The member for Kalgoorlie commenced his speech by stating that what he would say was irrefutable and that he would present arguments that were undeniable. His arguments were inexplicable, that is for sure, but for a new member of Parliament to show that level of humility and say that his arguments are undeniable and irrefutable shows an incredible degree of hubris. These members are the young guns of the Liberal Party!

Mr R.C. Kucera: One young gun and one not-so-young gun.

Mr M. McGOWAN: One flintlock rifle and one young gun, but we all know they are small calibre, big bore.

The central premise of the arguments presented by those opposite relate to the law and order issue.

Mr M.J. Birney interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The big bore is off again! I wish he would tone it down a little. We have heard the arguments about law and order from the member for Kalgoorlie. There is a fundamental test of any Government's achievements in law and order. I will refer to figures that were released recently concerning the number of reported offences. If people want to see how a Government performs on law and order, they should look at the number of reported offences.

Mr M.J. Birney interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The member should listen. The number of reported offences against a person for the financial year 2002-03 compared with those in 2003-04 show a reduction of 7.8 per cent.

Mr M.J. Birney: Is that for the year?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Yes; a reduction of 7.8 per cent.

Mr M.J. Birney interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: These figures are a comparison of the financial years 2002-03 and 2003-04, and show a reduction of 7.8 per cent. They show a reduction in offences against property of 6.9 per cent and a reduction of total selected offences of 7.3 per cent. That is the central test that should be applied in these circumstances. Members cannot argue that things have all gone pear-shaped, as the member for Kalgoorlie said, when those figures show the outcome.

The second thing the member for Kalgoorlie said - I think it was in relation to police officers - was that a commitment had not been fully delivered. My understanding is that a term of government goes for four years. It is now December 2003, which means that this Government is two years and 10 months into its term, and is well on the way to delivering the number of new officers -

Ms S.E. Walker interjected.

Mr Matt Birney; Ms Sue Walker; Deputy Speaker; Mr Mark McGowan; Acting Speaker; Mrs Michelle Roberts;
Dr Janet Woollard; Mr Bob Kucera; Mr John Hyde; Mr Rob Johnson

Mr M. McGOWAN: The flintlock is at it again; the old flintlock is banging away. This Government has delivered a large increase in police numbers and the term of the Government is for four years. I have every confidence that we will deliver in total on that commitment.

Ms S.E. Walker: Did you do one year of law?

Mr M. McGOWAN: No, I did not.

Mr J.N. Hyde: How much stress leave did the member for Nedlands take?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I can guarantee the member for Nedlands that I have never been on stress leave.

Ms M.M. Quirk: Have you ever had chronic fatigue?

Mr M. McGOWAN: No, I just keep on going. I managed to be elected to Parliament while holding down a job. I did not take stress leave to run for Parliament. I did not take leave and organise the numbers whilst receiving full pay from the taxpayers when running for Parliament. It may be that the member for Nedlands and I have some differences in how we approached our elections to this place.

The Government has delivered on those very important areas of DNA and laws governing outlaw motorcycle gangs. We are delivering on police numbers and we have delivered greatly through the number of police officers that this Government is putting back on the beat. The results can be seen in the number of reported offences.

The central premise from which the Opposition starts is flawed; it is a failure. The Opposition's final effort in private members' business for 2003 is to debate a motion that is meaningless and starts from a failed premise. It does not even take account of the facts.

The motion moved by the member for Kalgoorlie says that the House recognises that Western Australians have lost confidence in the State Labor Government. If any group of people in this State should have lost the confidence - and I expect will lose the confidence - of the people of Western Australia, it is the state Liberal Party. In the past month we have seen a group of people who literally hate one another come together. Week after week we see the Deputy Leader of the Opposition undermine the leader of the Liberal Party. What is more, they do not even deny it. When the member for Kingsley was on the radio yesterday, she said that "some" Liberals want to win the next election. She is in the thick of it. She is the one holding the current Leader of the Opposition in his position. She has two or three votes. The member for Nedlands is one of her two or three votes. The member for Kingsley is holding the Leader of the Opposition in position against the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. What sort of party is it in which its deputy leader undermines the leader? The young gun - the member for Kalgoorlie - is in cahoots with the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and is determined to undermine and knock off the Leader of the Opposition. How can anyone in Western Australia have any confidence in the Liberal Party?

However, it gets worse. In my view, the education portfolio is one of the most senior portfolios. Underneath the rough exterior of the Opposition's education spokesman on education is a decent human being. The Opposition's education and energy spokesperson has lost pre-selection. The environment portfolio is one of the most significant positions that any member of a political party can hold. The environment is one of the top three issues for all Australians. The Opposition's environment spokesperson is also about to lose his preselection. All the Liberal members in the back row will be out of the Parliament after the next election - the entire back row! Members opposite criticise us and say people do not have confidence in us. However, it gets even worse.

Mr R.C. Kucera: There's a new model coming.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.W. Andrews): Loath as I am to spoil members' enjoyment this afternoon, perhaps it would be useful for members to refer to the motion at hand.

Mr R.N. Sweetman interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I was going to say nice things about the member for Ningaloo.

I think that all Western Australians will recognise that they have confidence in this State Government. It has been a very good State Government. It has delivered on a range of matters that the former Government never had the courage to deliver on. The public can compare the confidence it can have in this Government with the lack of confidence it can have in the Opposition. The member for Ningaloo - another member who sits on the back row and who will not be here after the next election - told the truth when he said that the Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries is doing a good job, and for that he was demoted. He has been moved sideways one way and then the other in the Chamber.

Mr R.N. Sweetman: Because I could not go further back!

Mr Matt Birney; Ms Sue Walker; Deputy Speaker; Mr Mark McGowan; Acting Speaker; Mrs Michelle Roberts;
Dr Janet Woollard; Mr Bob Kucera; Mr John Hyde; Mr Rob Johnson

Mr M. McGOWAN: He has been moved so that when the cameras focus on the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Ningaloo cannot be seen in the background. The Leader of the Opposition has demoted one of the most talented, honest and decent people in the Liberal Party. The member now has no portfolio. The environment spokesperson will lose his preselection and the education spokesperson has lost his preselection. One of the most decent members of the Opposition has lost all his portfolios, and the experienced, competent members of the Liberal Party will leave the Parliament after the next election. The Leader of the Opposition is unwilling and unable to discipline one of his members who drinks and drives over 0.05. That is the state of the Opposition. I feel sorry for the Opposition. Can members imagine having to make a choice between the members for Cottesloe and Mitchell as a party leader? It is the worst choice in Australia. The people can have no confidence in them.

On the other hand, the Government is united. It is a good Government that is willing to take on the issues that matter to Western Australians. It is improving the crime rate in Western Australia to make sure that all Western Australians can feel more safe and secure in their homes.

Point of Order

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Mr Acting Speaker, I do not know whether you could hear the member for Nedlands continually interject on the last speaker. She made inane interjections. She said to the member, "Tell us about your new house." She asked whether the member had pimples when he finished law school, and she also asked him whether he ever had a perm. She repeated those comments some dozen times in a childish and inane way. I do not think it does her or the standards of this House any credit. We are debating a serious issue, which the member for Rockingham and other members in this House have taken seriously. The member's inane and stupid comments should not be tolerated.

Ms S.E. WALKER: Point of order -

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Point of order, the member for Nedlands is eating in the House.

Ms S.E. WALKER: I thank the minister. I was chewing a mint. The minister has been -

Mr R.C. Kucera: You are a disgrace.

Ms S.E. WALKER: The Minister for Police and Emergency Services has been throwing insults at me in the most immature and childish way all afternoon. It has been the case from the moment I stood. It is a disgrace for the minister to go on about that. I will not say what she said because it was so rude.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.W. Andrews): That is enough of that. When the member for Rockingham spoke, he threw a few jibes at the members for Kalgoorlie and Nedlands, and they responded. It is about time that we got back to the motion and cut out that little bit of fun for the rest of the afternoon.

Debate Resumed

DR J.M. WOOLLARD (Alfred Cove) [5.20 pm]: The motion on the Notice Paper reads -

That this House notes with grave concern that this State Labor Government has failed to fully deliver on 60 per cent of its pre-election polling promises.

I realise that the member for Kalgoorlie was talking about the 60 per cent more in terms of the issue of policing. However, it states 60 per cent of its pre-election polling policies. Therefore, apart from law and order, I want to remind the Government of some of the other policies that it has not kept. First, I have a parliamentary intern who has been with me now for several months. For the past year we have been trying to get the figures for the police numbers in my electorate, because a constant stream of people who have been burgled - not just burgled, but brutally burgled - are coming to see me, with broken arms, bruised faces, broken noses, and fractured ribs. The situation is not improving. When I ask the Minister for Police and Emergency Services in question time whether she will give me the numbers for the police stations, how many police are on duty in each shift, and how many police officers are seconded for other activities, I am told that I cannot be given these figures because they are too sensitive.

Mr J.N. Hyde: Who has said that in writing? You have made an allegation, but who has said that in writing?

Dr J.M. WOOLLARD: The member for Perth asked me who has said that in writing. If the member for Perth were to look at questions on notice, he would see that it was the Minister for Police who said to me that these figures are too sensitive.

Mr J.N. Hyde: No. You are paraphrasing. Put it in context.

Mr Matt Birney; Ms Sue Walker; Deputy Speaker; Mr Mark McGowan; Acting Speaker; Mrs Michelle Roberts;
Dr Janet Woollard; Mr Bob Kucera; Mr John Hyde; Mr Rob Johnson

Dr J.M. WOOLLARD: I will get out the questions for the member for Perth, and the responses.

There is still an increase in crime in my electorate.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: There is a decrease in crime in your district of 7.5 per cent. Home burglaries are down 7.8 per cent, and offences against the person are down 22.7 per cent, all for the September quarter.

Dr J.M. WOOLLARD: Those figures that the minister is giving are not a true reflection of what is happening in the community. Those figures do not refer to the people who are coming in to see me who have been assaulted. I have been told by the police themselves - ex members of the Police Service, not current members -

Several members interjected.

Dr J.M. WOOLLARD: I will not dob in police officers who are doing a very good job in my electorate and other electorates. I have been told that we cannot compare one year with the next because it is like comparing apples with pears; the statistics are changed every year. Why will the minister not give me those figures? The minister must know how much crime there is in my electorate. Why is the minister not doing something about it? Why is the minister not keeping the promise that she made to the community?

Mrs M.H. Roberts: So you do not like crime going down? Is that it?

Dr J.M. WOOLLARD: Crime certainly is not going down.

Point of Order

Ms S.E. WALKER: The minister got up a while ago and talked about throwing barbs. I have had to sustain personal insults this afternoon from the minister, and now she is starting to attack, in a very loud voice, the member for Alfred Cove.

Several members interjected.

Ms S.E. WALKER: Mr Acting Speaker, you can hear the comments from members on my left. I would like to hear what the member for Alfred Cove has to say.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.W. Andrews): There is no point of order. The member for Alfred Cove took the interjection from the minister, and they were speaking to each other. I suggest to the member for Alfred Cove that she speak through the Chair.

Debate Resumed

Dr J.M. WOOLLARD: I apologise, Mr Acting Speaker. I did take that interjection, and I should have been speaking through the Chair. The executive summary of the Labor policy "Making our community safer" states -

All Western Australians are entitled to be - and feel - safe and secure, in their homes, at work, at school, on the streets, wherever they may be.

I cannot speak about other electorates, because I have not discussed this with other members, but that is not happening in my electorate. People are coming into my electorate office and asking me when something will be done. All I can say to them is, "I am sorry. I know promises were made, but a lot of promises were made, and they are just not being kept". The policy states also -

West Australians have sent a clear message that they have had enough.

It states also -

Labor will be tough on crime, and on the causes of crime.

What most people say, and what most police officers tell us, is that the reason we have so much crime is drugs. It is not surprising that the crime rate is increasing, because the Government has gone soft on drugs with its cannabis legislation and with its education sessions for people who are caught three times in possession of a large amount of cannabis. That is the law and order promise that has not been kept. People do not feel safe and secure in their homes. The motion on the Notice Paper states that the Government has failed to fully deliver on 60 per cent of its pre-election polling promises. Let us look at some other areas. The Labor Party "Heritage for the new millennium" policy states -

Labor regards the State's cultural heritage as an irreplaceable asset that makes an important contribution to the quality of life in Western Australia -

Point of Order

Mr Matt Birney; Ms Sue Walker; Deputy Speaker; Mr Mark McGowan; Acting Speaker; Mrs Michelle Roberts;
Dr Janet Woollard; Mr Bob Kucera; Mr John Hyde; Mr Rob Johnson

Mr R.C. KUCERA: Mr Acting Speaker, I do not want to interrupt the member for Alfred Cove, but I cannot see how the issue of heritage has anything to do with this debate on law and order.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.W. Andrews): This is an excellent opportunity to clarify an error that has taken place, on which I have allowed too much free scope. There is an error on the Notice Paper. There has been a transcription mistake. The motion on the Notice Paper reads -

That this House notes with grave concern that this State Labor Government has failed to fully deliver on 60 per cent of its pre-election polling promises.

In fact, the motion should read “policing promises”. That is the correct motion that is before the House. However, that is not the way the motion appears on the Notice Paper, and we have tended to let the debate drift somewhat because of that error on the Notice Paper.

Mr R.C. Kucera: So it is not heritage.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members, we should allow the member for Alfred Cove a bit of give and take on this matter. An error has been made. The member for Alfred Cove is obviously in the position in which she was addressing the motion as she read it on the Notice Paper, but she has now been told that it is a different motion. That puts her under a bit of pressure, but I think we will kick on for the rest of the day.

Debate Resumed

Dr J.M. WOOLLARD: The motion on the Notice Paper does read 60 per cent of its pre-election polling promises, so I was going to talk about the broken promises in health, education, heritage and forests. However, I accept your ruling, Mr Acting Speaker, that there has been a error in the Notice Paper.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members, that is enough!

Dr J.M. WOOLLARD: The motion is about Labor’s pre-election policing promises. Labor’s “Making our community safer” election policy stated that all Australians are entitled to be and feel safe and secure. It stated that in working to make our community safer, Labor would adopt a comprehensive approach to tackling crime. I have listened to the member for Kalgoorlie. Had I realised that the motion related solely to broken election promises on policing, I would have brought into the Chamber not the posters of trains or graphs that government members flashed about, but the Christmas card that I received from the Mayor of Fremantle. It is a lovely Christmas card. The photo on the front is of a mounted policeman. It says inside: all I want for Christmas is more police. I am not surprised that is all the Mayor of Fremantle wants for Christmas, because Fremantle and Alfred Cove both come under the Fremantle police district. I have been trying to get the statistics on the Fremantle police district. My parliamentary intern has tried to get the statistics on police numbers from the Government to support the argument I want to put to the Government that we need another police station near Canning Bridge because it is a hot spot for crime. It is easy for people to get into and out of the area via the freeway, Canning Highway and Leach Highway. The Mayor of Fremantle is also feeling the pressure on Fremantle, because all he wants for Christmas is more police. The Fremantle police district, which services both Fremantle and Alfred Cove, has insufficient police officers. When my parliamentary intern has asked questions, the shutters have gone down and doors have closed. An election will be held in 16 months. I want a promise from both sides of politics, but one has to wonder what good are promises bearing in mind the promises contained in Labor Party policy documents that have been broken.

Mr R.F. Johnson: We keep ours.

Dr J.M. WOOLLARD: The member for Hillarys has stated that if the Liberal Party is elected, it will keep its promises. I intend to be here after the next election. If the coalition wins the election, I will hold the member to that promise in the same way that I quote one promise after another that the Labor Party has broken but which we will not discuss today. The Labor Party has broken its promises on policing. The minister probably does the best job that she can. I wonder why nothing has changed. Is it that, as with other ministers, the bureaucrats run the show and it does not matter which party is in government?

Mrs M.H. Roberts: The difference of who has been in government is \$440 million to \$552 million.

Mr R.F. Johnson: Yes, and \$420 million extra taxes you have collected. You have mugged the people of Western Australia.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: We have put \$110 million extra into the Police Service. As the member for Alfred Cove said, that is what the public wants, and that is why we have given the police a 25 per cent budget increase.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order! The member for Alfred Cove has the floor.

Mr Matt Birney; Ms Sue Walker; Deputy Speaker; Mr Mark McGowan; Acting Speaker; Mrs Michelle Roberts;
Dr Janet Woollard; Mr Bob Kucera; Mr John Hyde; Mr Rob Johnson

Dr J.M. WOOLLARD: I was interested in the Minister for Police's comments on the extra funds that she has put into the Police Force. However, the promise was not that the Labor Party would increase funds for the police. The promise it gave to the community was that -

All Western Australians are entitled to be - and feel - safe and secure, in their homes, at work, on the streets, or wherever they may be.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: When you get the crime rate down, people start to feel safer. That is the plan.

Mr R.F. Johnson: It is rubbish.

Dr J.M. WOOLLARD: It seems to me that the Government is using smoke and mirrors. Why will the Government not be accountable and put the facts and figures on the table, so that the community can see what is happening? The response that it is sensitive information -

Mrs M.H. Roberts: I tabled those facts and figures today and you said that the Police Service had probably made them up. How can I win?

Dr J.M. WOOLLARD: Will the minister table the figures for the police stations that service my electorate?

Mrs M.H. Roberts: I tabled the figures, in the same way as every other Minister for Police has in the history of this State. The member has the district figures. There are more police officers in Western Australia now than ever before in our history.

Dr J.M. WOOLLARD: I am not interested in what other Governments have said. I am interested in the promises that this Labor Party made prior to the last election, one of which was that -

All Western Australians are entitled to be - and feel - safe and secure, in their homes, at work, on the streets, or wherever they may be.

My electorate has two very good police stations and the police officers at those stations work very hard, but they can do only so much with the resources they have. I have attended meetings with police officers from different areas who have said that it would be of great help if there were more clerical support staff to help them so that they were not spending their time doing paperwork. They said that they did not join the police to spend most of their time working in a police station. They joined the police because they want to work with the community. They want to be out there in the community. Do we see police in the community? I do not see them in my area very often. I cannot speak for other members in this House, but gone are the days when I can say to my children that if they are in trouble, they should ask a policeman. We might see the odd police car, but I believe that the Police Service has very much abrogated its role to security services. People in my area are very lucky. If they call the local security services, they will get a response and usually someone will be there within five to 10 minutes. The security services claim that their guards will be there within five minutes. The same does not happen with the police. I cannot speak for other members in the House. However, my electorate office has been burgled twice since I have been the local member, and the village housing my office is burgled on a regular basis. I seek an extension of time, Mr Acting Speaker.

[Leave granted for the member's time to be extended.]

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members might not like what the member says, but she has the right to say it.

Dr J.M. WOOLLARD: That reminds me of the statement often made by the member for South Perth: the Government will have its way but the Opposition will have its say. That statement is very important. People have a right to know that promises are not being kept. The community would like to feel secure and safe in their homes.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: I have no interest at all in any arrangements made behind the Chair. If members want to talk about those arrangements, they should go behind the Chair. The quicker the member for Alfred Cove gets through her speech, the sooner the member for Perth will get to his feet.

Dr J.M. WOOLLARD: The only way I will get those figures is through a freedom of information application. I will put one in.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: Make sure you put it in to the Commissioner of Police - I offer some helpful advice.

Dr J.M. WOOLLARD: The FOI officer will then approach the Commissioner of Police -

Mrs M.H. Roberts: They will respond. I do not know whether they will give the information.

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Dr J.M. WOOLLARD: I thank the minister. I will put the FOI application in to the FOI officer. I think it must be to the FOI officer as I have asked the minister in this House for the information, and she has said no. Therefore, I cannot see that the police commissioner will give me information that the minister has not provided to me. I will look for that information through other sources.

The ACTING SPEAKER: The member for Kalgoorlie and Minister for Tourism should go outside if they wish to speak to one another.

Dr J.M. WOOLLARD: I will seek that information. I hope to use that information, as I said previously, to encourage both major parties to make a promise to improve police services in my electorate. I hope that, unlike many other promises, that promise will be kept.

MR J.N. HYDE (Perth) [5.44 pm]: I oppose the motion totally. It is important to look at the facts and figures with policing promises and policing outcomes. I have some authority to speak on this matter because the postcode of 6003, Northbridge, has the highest crime rate of any postcode in the State. Given the number of people who visit Northbridge and the activities undertaken, the figures under the previous Government and the previous seven Governments showed that Northbridge has had the highest crime rate. How do the figures compare in the central police district?

I note that four Liberals, one Independent and one National are in the Chamber despite it being the Opposition's motion.

[Quorum formed.]

Mr J.N. HYDE: I am delighted to see support on this side of the House. It is important that we look at the central metropolitan police district, which I share with the member for Nedlands, who is AWOL, the member for Churchlands, who is AWOL, and the member for Cottesloe, who is also AWOL. I share the western suburbs services with the member for Nedlands, who made some false accusations.

Mr M.J. Birney: You would go down well in the western suburbs.

Mr J.N. HYDE: I am a person of the western suburbs. They vote for me strongly. Why? We promised to get crime down. What has happened with assaults in the central police district? They are down by 20 per cent. What has happened with threatening behaviour? Apart from this small parliamentary pocket in West Perth, it is down by 20 per cent. Deprivation of liberty - except those of us stuck in here for the rest of the evening - is down by 27 per cent. Aggravated robbery is down by 50 per cent. All offences against the person are down by 20 per cent. Let us not look at annual figures. I want to look at the most recent three-month period. Let us look at what is happening now, not the massaging of figures that we saw earlier.

I turn to offences against property. Burglaries are down by 10 per cent, and burglaries not in residential areas are down by 22 per cent. Therefore, the central metropolitan police district, which covers the central business district and West Perth, has offences in commercial areas down by 22 per cent. People who come to my electorate office and who attend parents and citizens meetings and business precinct meetings tell me that the change in Northbridge is unbelievable. They say that crime is not an issue. The trend is backed up by not only the figures, but also anecdotal evidence. Talk to people who frequent Northbridge. Talk to people on the trains. Crime is coming down. The Government has put extra money into this area and has increased the central district force to be overcapacity and over the 500 officer mark. People in the suburbs of Nedlands, Cottesloe, City Beach and Peppermint Grove know that crime is down. The police are there. Let us look at the number of police on bicycles and horses. We are using Aboriginal police liaison officers and the whole gamut available to the Commissioner of Police and his very well-funded and well-intelligenced people, who are using police resources properly.

Let us look at other areas. The figures for the offences of receiving and illegal use are down by 20 per cent; arson is down by 44 per cent; and graffiti, the bane of society, is down by five per cent - this is coming off a low rate because of the work already done. Offences against property are down overall by 11 per cent. I refer here to the biggest police district, in which most of the crime in Western Australia tends to occur. I turn to the use of drugs, which is one of the biggest causes of crime. Trafficking of drugs is down by 31 per cent in the central police district, and possession of drugs is down by 33 per cent. Overall, figures are down by over 33 per cent.

I will give newer members a bit of advice. As a mayor of local government under a couple of police ministers in the previous Government, I formed a very good relationship with the local police. Everyone who has spoken today has said how great their local police are. Under Ministers Prince, Day and Wiese, the local police said to me, "For God's sake, Hydey, don't do ministerials, because every time a member of Parliament puts a stupid request to the minister, under the public service rules it has to go through about 30 layers of bureaucracy, and we are spending all our time on this paperwork rather than actually solving the crimes, so give us a call if it is

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important or you think you will get good publicity as a local member. Just think about what you're doing." Under the previous Government, I twigged early on about that. I find it very interesting that a couple of conservative members focused on the issue of letters not being answered and are ignoring the real figures that show that the crime rate is down in their electorates. That is the reality. All the investment in the Police Service for DNA technology, undercover work - as a local member, I am privileged to observe the undercover work that police are undertaking, but I do not officially know about operational matters - and the multi-tasking of crime is being reflected in these figures. We know that, because the police are tackling the knocking off of chemist shops and other shops like that and other issues, overall crime levels are down.

Last Thursday night restaurateurs and others told me that Northbridge is wonderful. I went in at 3.00 am to have a meal with some Chinese friends. Northbridge is amazing.

Mr R.F. Johnson: At 3.00 am!

Mr J.N. HYDE: Yes, at 3.00 am. Chinese families and others in Northbridge in my electorate were having evening meals. There were no kids exhibiting antisocial behaviour. The Northbridge policies of the Gallop Government are well supported.

Mr R.F. Johnson: What time do you go to bed?

Mr J.N. HYDE: Not all the people in my electorate work nine to five. Parliament sat until about midnight that night or there was a function, so it was very late. The crime rate is down. It is safe to be on the streets. The Office of Crime Prevention and local government are working together on lighting and other community development projects in a holistic approach to crime. We have not only met but also exceeded the promises of the Gallop Government. A reduction of 30 per cent in crime in my electorate has exceeded the promises of the Gallop Labor Government.

MR R.F. JOHNSON (Hillarys) [5.55 pm]: I was not going to enter into this debate because I thought the minister would speak, but that of course has not happened. The Gallop Government has not kept its promise on policing and law and order. Of course it has increased the budget of the Police Service. I accept that. That happens every year. I do not know of one year in which the budget for the Western Australia Police Service has decreased. However, the Government is not increasing the number of police officers. We all love to have new police stations. Under my Government, quite a few new police stations were opened in areas in which we thought they were necessary. However, the more police stations that are opened, the more police officers are dissipated because those police stations must be manned. Perhaps we should have a moratorium on new police stations, unless they are absolutely essential in an area that needs servicing. Unless the Government dramatically increases the number of police officers, all it will do is take police officers off patrol or special operations to do the clerical work in not only those new police stations but also the old police stations. This Government has made redundant a large number of public servants who have been doing the clerical work in police stations. It is a catch-22; it is double jeopardy. It has made redundant a lot of the unsworn police officers who obviously do a lot of the clerical work. However those jobs must be done, so sworn police officers have been moved from active policing - that is, from patrol work or special operations - to do clerical work. Policing has gone back 20 years. That is the policy of this Government and this minister. The Government may have increased police numbers over attrition by -

Mrs M.H. Roberts: One hundred and fifteen.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: That is a rubbish figure.

Mr M.J. Birney: It is 70 at best.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: My colleague says that it is 70 at best, and I believe his figures. The minister is adding police officers whom the previous Government put in place. We funded the budget for those police officers and they were being trained when we were in government. All this Government has done is increase taxes and charges to raise \$420 million, yet it boasts about putting a few quid into the police budget. Any fool can do that. Any fool can have a budget surplus if he taxes people more. The art of a balanced budget or a budget surplus is -

Mr A.D. McRae: Sell things!

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: No, it is cutting unnecessary expenditure, not wasting money and not increasing taxes and charges. That is the sign of a very clever Treasurer. We do not have one, unfortunately. Anyone can simply increase taxes. I have said in this House before that a monkey could do that, because it is not hard. The Government has the authority to increase taxes and charges, and that is exactly what it has done. However, it has not increased the number of police as it promised. It promised an extra 250 police officers. We will not see nearly an extra 200 police officers in the next 12 months, because an equal number will probably leave the Police Force. Twenty-five per cent of the total number of police officers are on either long service leave, annual

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Mr Matt Birney; Ms Sue Walker; Deputy Speaker; Mr Mark McGowan; Acting Speaker; Mrs Michelle Roberts;
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leave or sick leave. The minister knows that and I know that. She must increase the number of police officers enormously to move ahead. However, the minister has not done that; her Government has not done that and it has no intention of doing that. She will come out with some fudge figures during the next election to indicate that she has fulfilled this promise and that promise. People will not believe her. Crime rates may have gone down a little in Northbridge in the member for Perth's electorate, because that area has been saturated with police officers recently. However, people in my area are having Molotov cocktails thrown at their houses. A gang has smashed fences and brick walls with a front-end loader. It took a long time for the police to act on that problem. I have a lot of time for our police officers. To give them their due, they set up an operation and caught two of the people throwing Molotov cocktails at a house at about four o'clock in the morning. That could have resulted in a serious case of arson. It could have caused a death. The police caught those people eventually. However, police numbers are so stretched that -

Mrs M.H. Roberts interjected.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: There is only one police vehicle from the Joondalup area to service my electorate at night. However, when a regional cabinet meeting is held in Joondalup to try to protect the members for Joondalup and Wanneroo, suddenly there is a bit of activity, so the police move in and do a few things. It is not constant, but that is not their fault. It is the minister's fault. It is the Government's fault. It will not spend the money to recruit enough police officers to fulfil its promise.

Mr M.J. Birney: Did you know that the Joondalup policing district has lost more police than any other district in the State, despite the member for Joondalup advertising before the election that Labor would provide more police in that electorate?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Exactly. The people in the electorate of Joondalup will be told that at the next election. They will be reminded of what the member for Joondalup and the minister said at the last election. The Joondalup district has lost an enormous number of officers. The officers who are left are very good officers and are doing the best they can, but they need a tremendous amount of help. They need help from a Government that will increase police numbers so that they can get up to full strength again. The Joondalup zone is under-strength in police numbers. The member for Joondalup does not have the ownership of the zone of Joondalup.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.

Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.00 pm