

FREMANTLE POLICE STATION — CORRUPTION AND CRIME COMMISSION REPORT

147. Mrs L.M. O'MALLEY to the Minister for Police:

I refer to the Corruption and Crime Commission report on an incident at the Fremantle offender management area and the footage recently released of an injured member of the public being dragged upstairs at Fremantle Police Station. Can the minister outline to the house why Fremantle Police Station is not fit for purpose and advise what action this government is taking to fix this issue?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS replied:

I thank the member for Bicton for this question. She is quite right to be concerned about not just the offender management area at Fremantle Police Station, but also the adequacy of the station to be able to treat members of the public who are brought in there and its fitness for purpose for police officers to work out of.

Members may recall that back in 2012 the old Fremantle Police Station had to be vacated. That station was built back in 1897 and was not fit for modern-day purposes, and had asbestos issues. That was a problem confronting the former government and the member for Scarborough in her role as Minister for Police. The fact of the matter is that in 2013, the officers were moved out of there to a couple of different locations, but most officers were moved to High Street in Fremantle. They moved into a former bank building that was not fit for purpose. It was a building with stairs in it and not designed as a police station at all. This was a temporary fix; it was not ever a permanent solution. In 2013, police officers in the major district centre of Fremantle were put into what was an old bank. It had stairs and was not fit for purpose. No plan was ever entered into about where they were going to be in the long term. There was no future planning, no building, no police station, no tender, no lease—nothing. It was an inadequate situation.

I know that the former Minister for Police got a lot of complaints, particularly from police officers working out of that station. They were not happy. The people in Fremantle were not happy either because Fremantle Police Station does not have adequate parking there in High Street in Fremantle. It was not fit for purpose. Having been alerted to that in 2012, 2013 and 2014, the problem was still there. In 2015, 2016 and 2017, not one cent was ever put into the budget, and there was not a plan for anything else. It culminated in a recommendation from the Corruption and Crime Commission on 28 February this year. Paragraph [97] states —

The Commission recommends that the Government give urgent consideration to upgrading the Fremantle OMA ...

That is the offender management area. It is not just the offender management area that needs upgrading; it is the whole police station. This is another legacy issue from a government that did not invest in our police. Members need only look at the Langoulant report to see how they were denied.

Mrs L.M. Harvey interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Scarborough!

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Read page 160 of the Langoulant report, member for Scarborough, and hang your head in shame, because they were denied, year after year, the capital works funding that they needed. As a consequence, members of the public are being dragged upstairs.

Mrs L.M. Harvey interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Scarborough, I call you to order for the first time.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Are you proud of your lack of action at Fremantle—a major station?

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Hang your head in shame and be embarrassed.

Our government is moving on and cleaning up the situation, as it has had to do on so many different issues. We did not wait for the CCC report to come out. In November, after work by police, an expression of interest was advertised on the Tenders WA website for some 4 300 square metres of lettable space in the centre of Fremantle. That expression of interest closed mid-January and those expressions of interest are currently being evaluated. We are looking at alternative premises so that we can actually house police in suitable police accommodation so that we do not have cars parked all over the streets and that people who are brought into custody do not have to be put in that vulnerable situation of being assisted upstairs by police officers.