

CRIME AND ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR — CARNARVON

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

I refer to reports of a long-running and intensifying crime wave in Carnarvon, an issue that was raised with the minister in October 2021 and was the subject of a petition of 16 February with more than 1 250 signatures calling for immediate action. What is the minister doing to address these serious issues, noting there are reports every day of young people roaming the streets, truant from school and engaging in antisocial and criminal behaviour?

Mr P. PAPALIA replied:

I thank the member for the odd question. I note that the member representing that particular town is not here. He has absented himself, although he was here earlier, so I do not know why he has chosen to be absent while the Leader of the Opposition asked that question.

I note, of course, that there is not a series of reports of children wandering the streets and reports of truancy on a daily basis and that there is not a crime wave that the Leader of the Opposition has claimed and referred to and, finally, that operational policing matters are the purview and responsibility of the Commissioner of Police. What the Leader of the Opposition would expect me to do about any claimed crime wave—she often talks down the town of Carnarvon—under our role as the government and my role as the police minister, is ensure that the police have the resources they need to conduct operations. We know that the Western Australia Police Force is better resourced, better staffed, better led and, effectively, more capable of delivering good policing right across Western Australia now than at any time in the history of the state. That is undeniable.

As the Premier indicated, we are committed to growing the police force by 950 over a four-year period. I will be at another graduation on Thursday night to see another couple of squads graduate. The last number I heard was that we have grown the number of police by about 570 of that 950. There is a challenge with attrition because we are in the middle of a boom. Like everyone in Western Australia, we are chasing good people to recruit. We have funded, and will continue to fund, the greatest growth of police numbers in a four-year period in the history of this state. Police are resourced and better equipped, thanks in many ways to a lot of the technology, support and equipment that was delivered under the leadership of the now Speaker in the last term of office, and that is continuing now. They are supported directly by the State Operations Command Centre with 24/7 coverage and support and direct real-time intelligence for police on the ground. Every effort and resource is provided to the police to ensure that they can deliver policing everywhere across the state. I just wish that the Leader of the Opposition would not continue to criticise and attack the Western Australia Police Force. I note, of course, that the town the Leader of the Opposition referred to is the site of one of the greatest triumphs of the Western Australia Police Force and of any police force in the world in recent times, with the rescue of Cleo. I do not know why the Leader of the Opposition continues to do this. I suspect it has something to do with an impending by-election, but I suggest the Leader of the Opposition consider what she is doing when she talks down the Western Australia Police Force and Carnarvon.