

POLICE — RECRUITMENT

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

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's unprecedented investment in supporting our police, which is delivering the biggest growth in police numbers in the state's history. Can the minister update the house on the recruitment of new police officers; and can the minister advise the house whether he is aware of anyone seeking to undermine the great work our police are doing to keep WA safe?

Mr P. PAPALIA replied:

I thank the member. I can update the house. As I indicated earlier, the previous Minister for Police, the current Speaker, embarked upon the biggest Western Australia Police Force recruitment undertaking the state had ever seen. The recruitment process began in July last year with the objective of growing the force by 950 above attrition over four years—a growth of 15 per cent. At the end of the last term of office, eight squads graduated from the academy, with 235 additional officers joining the force. Since the election this year, 10 additional squads have graduated, with an additional 278 officers, for a total of 513 additional police officers in the 18 months or so since that process began. That is an extraordinary number, but we are going to continue delivering. Over the next three financial years, 200 additional officers above attrition will be recruited, and we are on target to deliver that every year. That is a good thing.

With regard to the second part of the member's question, apart from the member for North West Central, sadly I have become aware of other opposition members who are undermining our police force. I understand that the opposition police spokesperson was reported in *The West Australian* of 8 October as criticising the operational deployment decisions of the Commissioner of Police, who is, in my opinion, the best police commissioner this state has ever seen and who is confronting extraordinary challenges. The opposition police spokesperson is suggesting that police officers should not be assigned to the meth task force, because that is not a priority in the opposition's eyes. He also disparaged police officers who had been assigned to keeping COVID out of the state. He said that they are —

... standing around at the airport making sure that incoming passengers have their masks on ...

That is what the opposition believes police officers assigned to Operation TIDE are doing. They have been valiantly serving the state for the last 18 or 19 months, keeping a pandemic at bay. That is apparently what the opposition believes they have been doing. The opposition appears to be determined to throw open our borders and let meth and COVID flood into Western Australia. It is extraordinary. I was proud to be there this morning with the Attorney General to announce additional measures for the police to combat meth and bikies bringing meth into this state. I think the police officers who were standing behind us today know whose side the Western Australian government is on. The question, of course, is: whose side are the Liberal Party and the National Party on?