

MULTIFUNCTION POLICE FACILITIES

167. Mr T.G. STEPHENS to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services:

I was pleased to see the opening of the new Jigalong multifunction police facility last Friday. What number of similar facilities are to be built; what plans does the state government have to build more of these facilities; and what range of programs will be on offer from these facilities?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE replied:

I thank the member for Central Kimberley-Pilbara for his question. It certainly was a pleasure to travel with him to Jigalong last Friday for the opening of the Jigalong multifunction police facility. It was very warmly welcomed by the Martu people, who now have a permanent police station in the western desert. Of course, this is flowing through from the Gordon report and the implementation by this government of the recommendations in that report. We have now built and opened nine of these police stations. Initially, I think that program, along with the child protection and other services, was going to cost \$75 million. It has cost in the order of \$120 million. Thirty-three million dollars of that was spent on these nine facilities, which are now at Balgo, Bidadanga, Dampier Peninsula, Kalumburu, Kintore, Warakurna, Warburton and Warmun. It was great to see the reception from the people of Jigalong. I thank Senior Sergeant Brian Dance and Sergeant John Garlett, who are posted there and who have started building a very good rapport and relationship with the people. The leadership of the Jigalong community welcomed the police. It recognises the work that the police will do to provide services to the people and to give them the sense of safety and security that they have a right to expect.

We have seen what has happened in other parts of the state. I will use Kalumburu as an example. After the police had been there for nine months or so, 91 people had been charged with 304 sexual offences. When the police live in the community and build confidence with the people, clearly people report these offences. It is almost impossible to expect that people will report offences when a police officer might visit the community for one or two days and then go away, and the people are left there, hundreds of kilometres from the nearest police station, after having made a report against someone who lives in their community. When these centres are established, and when the police build a rapport and a relationship with the people, we find that a lot more reports come through, and I am sure that that will be the situation with all the multifunction police facilities.

All this was done without any assistance from the Howard Liberal government. We asked that government for assistance, but it rejected our request. However, when it suddenly discovered a year or so ago that there was a real issue in Indigenous communities, it then committed money so that we could build another three facilities, and we are looking at building those this year and into next year. They certainly have been a great success for this government—a government that for the first time did not sweep under the carpet abuse in Indigenous communities. We are doing something very constructive about it in not only providing police —

Dr K.D. Hames: That's rubbish.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I welcome the interjection from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the member for Dawesville. People might remember that the former member for Ningaloo in this place pointed out that when the member for Dawesville was the minister responsible for Indigenous affairs, the member for Ningaloo asked the member for Dawesville to go to Carnarvon and do something about the sexual abuse in the Indigenous communities there. What did the member for Dawesville do, as the then minister? He printed some pamphlets to educate people. He did nothing to attack the cause of sexual abuse in Indigenous communities. Quite rightly, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition wants to make a bit of noise because he is ashamed of the total lack of response by the last Liberal government on this issue. However, this government has taken action. We closed that sordid affair out there in the Swan Valley, which the former government promoted, to protect children, and we have put in place nine multifunction police facilities to make sure that we look after those people.

Withdrawal of Remark

Mr R.C. KUCERA: I distinctly heard the member for Dawesville refer to a previous member as a liar. That person is no longer in this house and does not have an opportunity to defend himself. I think the member should withdraw that remark.

The SPEAKER: That particular protection is not available to former members, unfortunately.