

POLICE, DNA SAMPLES, DELAYS IN ANALYSING

2720. Mrs C.L. Edwardes to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services

I refer the Minister to the answer to question on notice No. 2343, and ask is the Minister satisfied that valuable Police time and resources are not being wasted in continuing to investigate a crime when DNA evidence of the suspect is tied up in a backlog at the PathCentre?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS replied:

Western Australia's Criminal Investigation (Identifying People) Act 2002 is the envy of police jurisdictions throughout Australia and \$20 million dollars has been allocated for its implementation. The broad base of our legislation has meant that Western Australian police officers collect on average more samples than other jurisdictions and our database is growing at a rate in excess of other States.

Both the State Government and the Western Australia Police Service are committed to minimising the time taken by the PathCentre to analyse samples without affecting the efficacy of the analysis.

While the collection and analysis of DNA evidence forms an important part of an investigation, it is essential that investigations continue so as to maximise the collection of all available evidence. The Police Service further advise it would be inadvisable to suspend their investigation into a particular crime whilst awaiting DNA results.

Since February 2001, the PathCentre has been significantly expanded both to accommodate the increased volume of samples requiring analysis and to improve the timeliness of that analysis. Staff numbers have increased from 11 in February 2001 to 40 in June 2004 and \$500 000 of equipment has been acquired to enable the laboratory to meet the demands of additional DNA assessments.