

PUBLIC VIOLENCE — POLICE RESOURCES

Matter of Public Interest

THE SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson) informed the Assembly that he was in receipt within the prescribed time of a letter from the member for Hillarys seeking to debate a matter of public interest.

[In compliance with standing orders, at least five members rose in their places.]

MR P.A. KATSAMBANIS (Hillarys) [2.56 pm]: I move —

That this house expresses its deep concern about the ongoing violent crime in Western Australia and condemns the Labor government's ongoing refusal to commit to a significant increase in police numbers, including to replace those taken off the front line to deal with COVID.

It gives me no delight at all to bring this motion to the house today. I just wish that we did not have to come into this place and continually ask the government, on behalf of the people of Western Australia, to step up to the mark and deal with the violent crime epidemic that we are living through. We see it almost daily in newspaper headlines and on television news footage. We hear about it from constituents. We hear about it from members of the general public, particularly from business owners in the CBD and Northbridge who are seeing their businesses dry up as people are discouraged from coming in and enjoying the vibrancy. The city is being smashed by violent crime, but it extends beyond the city; it extends to our suburbs and our regions—every country town across the state. I do not want to steal the thunder of other members who want to speak on this motion: the government cannot continue to simply ignore or pretend that this issue does not exist. We know that through COVID, crime generally and crime statistics have gone down. That is a good thing. We want to see more of that. One area of crime that does not seem to have been impacted by the downward slide of the COVID epidemic—in fact, it has continued to increase—is violent crime. Members do not have to take my word for it. I know that the Premier and the minister like getting up and saying that that is not true.

If members go to the Western Australia Police Force website and the section on crime statistics, they will see a tab of offence categories. Offences against the person covers homicide, sexual offences, assaults in family situations, assaults in non-family situations, threatening behaviour in both family and non-family situations, deprivation of liberty, and robbery. They are categorised as offences against the person. They are all violent crimes. Those figures date from 2011–12 all the way to 2019–20. In the 2019–20 financial year, those offences are the highest on record. Even more disturbingly, between the 2018–19 and 2019–20 financial year, the crimes of assault in family situations and assault in non-family situations, threatening behaviour in both family and non-family situations, and robbery, all went up. Those violent crimes, crimes against the person, are not going down; they are going up. I hope they have gone down since June 2020. However, this government has moved from monthly crime statistics to three-monthly crime statistics, so even if there has been an improvement, the public does not know about it. What the public does know is that bashings, such as the unfortunate bashing and subsequent death of Mr Emiliano Lombardi, are happening far too frequently.

There is violence in Northbridge. I noted with great interest that the Minister for Police was quoted in the media a short time ago as saying, essentially, that some young people were treating every weekend in Northbridge as though it were New Year's Eve, and that is true. That is where the minister and I are in total agreement. A bunch of idiots are doing the wrong thing and they need to stop. Unfortunately, that bunch of idiots are empowered and are allowed to get away with their stupid, dangerous behaviour because there are not enough police on our streets to discourage them from acting that way in the first place and stopping them before they harm other people, if they choose to do the wrong thing. The WA Police Union said quite clearly that on any given Friday or Saturday night, as few as 20 to 25 police officers could be available to police 300 000 people in the central Perth area, including the Perth CBD, Northbridge and surrounding suburbs, as well as the Burswood entertainment precinct, which includes Optus Stadium. There are 20 to 25 police officers for 300 000 people, many of whom are on the streets enjoying the entertainment precincts. The police union issued a media release on 2 August calling for more police at the Perth police centre. The president of the police union, Mr Harry Arnott, is quoted as saying —

The situation at the Perth Police Centre is absolutely dire. We are 200 police officers short just in Perth alone and if we want to address the issues currently plaguing our CBD we need more blue shirts ...

That is the police union. Our police officers are begging for more police and saying they need 200 more just in the central area around Perth's CBD and the entertainment precincts. That is not accounting for the fact that we do not have enough police in our suburbs and we certainly do not have enough police in our regions. I have said it before and I will say it again: this government has turned a blind eye to that year after year. The police annual report highlighted that in 2019 there were fewer police officers than there had been in 2017, despite the government claiming it had recruited 125 extra police, I think it was, for specialist squads. Despite that recruitment, natural attrition

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and redundancies reduced the overall number of police. Recently, during COVID, the government was forced to provide funding for 150 extra places, which is good. That is better than nothing. However, 150 does not replace the 400 to 500 officers who have been taken off the front line to deal with just COVID duties. They have been pulled out of police stations, pulled out of specialist squads, and they have been put on COVID duties—necessary duties—but it highlights once more how thin the thin blue line really is.

The line has snapped because the government cannot replace 400 to 500 officers with 150 and tell the public of Western Australia that “she’ll be right”, because she won’t be right. It is not right to leave the law-abiding public of Western Australia at the mercy of thugs and criminals because the government is not prepared to put enough police on the beat to look after our community properly. The government has not done it. It has failed that test. The Commissioner of Police confirmed just today that those 150 officers will not be fully operational until April or May next year. They make the government’s statistics look good—it has lots of sworn police officers—but 150 of them have not graduated from the academy yet. They cannot have, because it takes 28 weeks for a police officer to graduate from the academy. Had the government put those 150 on a year or two years ago, when it had the opportunity to do so, they might be ready now to hit the streets, but all they are hitting is the bitumen at Joondalup—and they should hit it because we want those recruits to be fully trained and we want them on the streets. We need them as soon as possible. However, because of the government’s inaction over three and a half years, it has left the public exposed, and it has let down the public. It has also let down police officers, because when there are fewer of them, they are forced to do more. The government should consider what it did over Christmas with the surge in Northbridge, again in response to media. That is what this government does: the more media there is on a subject, the more it tries to ameliorate the problem.

In response to media about violence in Northbridge, the government committed additional overtime money. It asked already overworked police officers to do more, and they did. Our police officers, our policemen and policewomen, step up. They go toward trouble when we run away from trouble. They protect us, and they stepped up, but at what cost? It was at a cost to their health—their physical and mental health. The more we drive those people to do more and more, the quicker we will break them. That is a sad reality. If the government thinks the solution to more police on the street is to fund more overtime, all it is doing is breaking those people quicker than ever and essentially condemning us to even fewer officers in the future.

The real solution is to step up to the mark, to provide a genuine and meaningful increase in the police force. The government has failed so far. It has failed dismally. Eleven of the 15 police districts at the last count had fewer than their authorised strength. On every single occasion that the opposition—be it myself as shadow minister or members of the Nationals WA in the other place—has asked questions about the authorised strength versus the actual strength of police districts outside the metropolitan area, not once in three and a half years has any of those police districts met or exceeded its authorised strength. It is continual failure, and the government is condemned for that continual failure. It has the opportunity to correct its failure one last time. If it does, it will unfortunately be too little, too late to count, as we are getting out of the COVID period and crime will inevitably go up, as the commissioner has admitted it will. It will be too little, too late, but it will be better than nothing. We get that opportunity, but it would have been better had the government focused on providing more police to deal with violence and out of control crime in our community earlier. We will see what the government does in the next few months. If it does not step up to the mark and if it does not provide a meaningful increase in police numbers, it will be condemned by the public of Western Australia, and rightfully so.

MRS L.M. HARVEY (Scarborough — Leader of the Opposition) [3.10 pm]: I rise to contribute to the motion brought to this house today by the member for Hillarys. As the member for Hillarys said, it gives the opposition no joy to raise this matter. One needs only to go to the Crime Stoppers WA website to see that Western Australia is under assault. The rate of crime is very concerning. The Crime Stoppers website has 34 pages. In some of the cases on that website, people have been charged. The website has alarming statistics about assaults in our CBD and across the length and breadth of our suburbs. It is no longer happening just in Perth and Northbridge. It is happening everywhere. Every page on the Crime Stoppers website is about assault, robbery, burglary, attempted robbery, assault, burglary, car theft and so on. These things are happening in our suburbs.

We need only to go to the headlines in the paper to see exactly what is happening. In my suburb of Scarborough, the foreshore was doing very well. It had been cleaned up. The culture had changed. However, some alarming behaviour is now taking place. In January, at the Scarborough foreshore, two girls aged 15 and 17 years attacked a 21-year-old woman and a 26-year-old man who had been walking to their car after they had been to the beach, puncturing the woman in the lung, and lacerating the man’s wrist, causing tendon damage. That is in my patch.

Further, we have had another scissor attack. What is going on in our community? I know about this one, because I know some of the young people who were in the service station when this assault occurred. A young man stole—I have to say allegedly, because this has not been to court—\$50 out of a young girl’s pocket after she had gone to the ATM. That young person was confronted by another customer in the service station, and upon being confronted

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the individual produced a pair of scissors and stabbed that customer, a 21-year-old City Beach man, cutting his chin and requiring him to go to Royal Perth Hospital for treatment.

Point of Order

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Mr Speaker, I am mindful of the sub judice rule when we are talking about charges. I wonder whether you might give a ruling on what the Leader of the Opposition is now saying.

The SPEAKER: No-one has been named.

Debate Resumed

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I did say allegedly. I do not think anyone who reads my contribution in *Hansard* could say that I breached the sub judice convention.

The young boy who has been charged with these alleged offences is yet to go to court. The two young girls who were in that service station were traumatised by this. One of them allegedly had \$50 stolen from her pocket, for goodness sake. That is what led to this violent incident. All those girls had been doing was paying for petrol and withdrawing some money from the ATM. I find that outrageous.

Ms M.M. Quirk interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Girrawheen!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: On 10 September, there was another scissor attack, this time in Highgate. The article states in part —

A man in his 50s is in a serious condition in hospital after he was allegedly stabbed with a pair of scissors during a violent attack in Highgate.

It is no wonder people are frightened to go into the city.

We cannot forget last week, on 18 September, the shocking footage of 45-year-old Mandurah woman Tammy Andrews. The article states in part —

A Mandurah woman has told how she was ambushed in her car and left with a gash in her head which needed 18 staples to hold her scalp together.

...

Ms Andrews said she saw a shadow coming towards her, and she turned her head away when she saw he was holding a weapon.

The man then threw the metal tool he was holding through her open car window and it hit her in the head.

“It came very close to my temple, it could have killed me,” Ms Andrews said.

“It’s not right. He shouldn’t be allowed to get away with it, I hope they catch him.”

She thought she was going to die as her head felt numb and blood gushed out while she drove to a nearby home for help.

Ms Andrews had suffered a stroke just months prior to this attack.

As I understand it, we still do not know who attacked Ms Andrews. That person, who was willing to confront a woman who was alone in her car, in a car park, with a metal bar, has probably not been apprehended because of the shortage of police officers on the frontline and is still out there somewhere. We know there is a shortage, because the statistics do not lie. We know there is a shortage because the head of the WA Police Union is telling us there is a shortage.

Ms M.M. Quirk interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Girrawheen!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: We know there is a shortage because police officers keep saying to us that it is really embarrassing. They say they are getting calls for help, and they have to tell people that they cannot get there. They have to ring people up and say, “Is that intruder still in your backyard? We don’t have a car to send to you.” These are the sorts of things that are happening in our suburbs. I know that every member in this place is hearing these stories from their constituency, just as we are. That is why we have raised this issue in this Parliament.

I refer to another article dated 23 September. The headline is, “Police investigating Armadale men’s refuge death release CCTV image of man they wish to speak to.” The article states that on 15 September, paramedics were called to provide assistance and found a 43-year-old man who was dead. When they arrived, they could do nothing for him, except call the police.

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Those are the issues that are confronting our community. That is why we raise this matter in Parliament today. It is not the fault of the police. The police are doing the best they can. They are working overtime. They are exhausted. They need more resources. The problem is that this government is not providing the resources in the requisite time to give them the support that they need to keep our community safe. People will not feel safe in the CBD until the government gets its act together and puts more police on the frontline.

MR K.M. O'DONNELL (Kalgoorlie) [3.16 pm]: Greetings, Mr Speaker. How good would our society be without ongoing violent crime. However, sadly, violent crime continues to be a staple of our society.

One area in which violent crime occurs is when members of the community take violence into their own hands. Recently, a group of Aboriginal families escalated an argument and an incident, and they all piled into a car and handed out their own summary jurisdiction. Many charges have been laid for things like that. I do not wish to identify Aboriginal families. What I am trying to highlight is that family members have been going about their daily business, and one person says something has gone on, and it has then been follow the leader and people have committed violent acts, when the day before that was never on their mind. The feuding can start out as a minor disagreement, but weeks, months or years later, other members within the family structure take it upon themselves to take the law into their own hands and hand out their own summary jurisdiction. A recent example is two women and a man who were charged with acts with intent to cause grievous bodily harm, which is a serious violent offence in itself. That matter is ongoing in the courts. A major problem with this type of violence is when some members of the family pile into a car and go to sort out other family members. Imagine if you were sitting in your home and a car pulled up outside and people wielding baseball bats kicked in the door and stormed your house. It is not good. In another incident, a man who was trying to avoid a carload of people hid in a skip bin, but they found him and used baseball bats and other homemade weapons to belt him completely and utterly, causing serious injuries, including broken bones. This type of crime is unacceptable.

Yes, we do need more police. We need to ensure that the number of police recruits who go through the Western Australian Police Academy is higher than the attrition rate. We cannot have the attrition rate higher than the academy graduation numbers. We also need to identify positions within the police department that could be carried out by unsworn civilian staff. At the moment, auxiliary police officers are carrying out lockup duties at various property stores within the metropolitan area and some country areas. However, many police officers are still rostered to work on the front counter of police stations. These highly trained, highly skilled officers are ready to go out and protect the public, but they are allocated the front counter, and just have to wait for someone to come in to ask them to sign a form, witness a signature, take a report for a stolen rubbish bin or even take a report for a lost watch or keys. That sort of area should be identified as being appropriate for unsworn civilian staff to do; they could man the counters so that police officers do not have to be there. If a police officer was required to attend a counter, they could be called back off the street or the beat. In other places, police officers are in charge of property—they accept, record and hold stolen property that has been seized or evidence that has been collected. That role could be taken up by a civilian; a highly skilled police officer does not need to do that. The reserve office within a police station is another area in which police officers are used to ensure that the equipment is right and stores are all up to date. We do not need a highly skilled police officer to do that.

Another way in which we could improve police numbers would be to commence a police reserve, who could help out. I have raised this idea before. Officers who had resigned or retired might be suitable as reserve officers. I think I, for one, would be suitable, member for Armadale. We could look at re-employing re-engagees. Those people have already been trained and we could get them back in. When I was a police officer, there were many times when we were under-resourced due to a lack of funding. Even when I applied to join the Western Australia Police Force in the early 1980s, the government at the time stopped running the police academies, so I had to wait a year before I could get in. I think my time is up; I have to let the Nationals WA member have his go.

Several members interjected.

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: All right; I will keep going.

We are not going to get away from violent crime; it is endemic. It is just a shame that it is occurring on a daily basis. I am probably not allowed to say it, but I would love the courts to stand up and support the police and the community by judicial officers putting themselves in their position and thinking what it would be like if something had happened to them or their granddaughter.

MRS M.H. ROBERTS (Midland — Minister for Police) [3.22 pm]: If I could have chosen a dorothy dix matter of public interest, this is the one I would have chosen, because it again gives us the opportunity to point out the failings of the Leader of the Opposition in her time as police minister in this state, and to put on the record the many things that the McGowan government has done to support the Western Australia Police Force and the community of Western Australia. We know that members opposite have no policies. There is not a single policy on their website or in the material they have put out. Today, they have exposed themselves even further; not only do they not have

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any policies, but also they do not have a strategy. There was a break between sitting weeks, but when the opposition came in here on Tuesday, they could not rustle up an MPI. It took them another 24 hours to get their act together and come up with an MPI—they reached for the bottom drawer and got out their old friend law and order. That was what the member for Scarborough did with her speech. She said, “Let’s see what’s on the Crime Stoppers website. Let’s see if I can find a couple of hideous crimes that I can just read to the Parliament. Let’s see if I can scan a few headlines from the past few months and perhaps just pull out the most horrific of them and read them to the Parliament. Let’s pretend that that is somehow a policy or a strategy.” Pointing out the problem or issues is not a solution. It is not a policy. The opposition has no political strategy. It has no strategy for policing. It has nothing.

Mr D.T. Redman interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Warren–Blackwood!

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I think someone in the Liberal Party does have a strategy—that is, to undermine the Leader of the Opposition. Otherwise, members opposite would not have let this motion come forward, as they would not want their leader to be so embarrassed. Let us go through it. In the Leader of the Opposition’s time as minister, the assault rate in this state doubled. We saw double-digit increases in crime.

Mr A. Krsticevic interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Carine, you are on three.

Mr A. Krsticevic: I didn’t say anything!

The SPEAKER: Your mouth did; you might not have done!

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The sanction rates of the previous government were so poor that it gave up reporting on them. Month after month I had to come in here and ask why it had abandoned telling us the clearance rates and sanction rates for crimes. Response times blew out. On top of that, they brought to this state the worst policing model ever. On what planet were just four metropolitan districts going to deliver a better service? Those districts were going to respond right across the metropolitan area. Do not take my word for it; let us go back to 2016, when you lot were in office. What did the then WA Police Union president, Mr George Tilbury, have to say? On 30 January 2017, just before the election, he said on Channel Seven news —

We have a crisis in this state with policing ... stop the rhetoric, stop the spin, do something about it, because the police on the front line are hurting.

That was during the Leader of the Opposition’s time. That is when police morale was at an all-time low. What else did George Tilbury have to say on 6PR mornings? He said —

...clearly the Commissioner, the Minister, and the Government are not listening to the frontline ... officers in this state who are overworked and under-resourced ... they are out of touch; they don’t get it.

That was George Tilbury, the president of the WA Police Union, back in January 2017. He was also quoted in *The West Australian* as saying —

“Front-line officers are frustrated and at breaking point,” ... “They simply can’t keep up with the rising demands.

I can tell the house that Mr Tilbury has not changed his mind, because he told a crime forum in Kalamunda on 1 July this year that over the last few years there had been a proposal for a particular model of policing, and that under the old model, police officers were travelling extraordinary distances to actually be able to attend an incident. Under the member for Scarborough, our police force was in crisis. The failed district model had to be abandoned. The former government broke our police force into local policing teams and response teams. The response teams had to respond over mega districts. It was not just Midland and Perth in the one district, but Wembley through to the hills and Kalamunda and out to Ellenbrook. The former government was not listening; George Tilbury was right about that. People in the outer metropolitan area asked for a 24-hour police station like the ones in the inner city. No, the member for Scarborough was not going to give them one. The member for Scarborough still does not support a 24-hour police station in Ellenbrook or Armadale. The member for Scarborough also did not support the extended hours through to 7.00 pm; she was happy for Ellenbrook Police Station to close at four in the afternoon. She was happy for the Belmont and Armadale police stations to also close at four in the afternoon. What about Fremantle Police Station? It is a major policing district—one of the big four. Officers were moved out of a decrepit building and into an old bank building that was not fit for purpose. There was negative report after negative report. It was pointed out to the former government years before it left office, and it was on the never–never. What have we done? We have allocated over \$50 million. We are fixing up all the things the previous government did nothing about. We have also supported our police with body armour and body-worn vests to protect them, something the member for Scarborough was asked for years to do. We have given them body-worn cameras to better protect the community, but also to better protect

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police officers. They cost over \$15 million. We have made them personal issue to every police officer on the front line. Over 5 000 people have already been fitted for their vests. We have invested in mobile phones for all police officers, something that only earlier this year the member for Scarborough scoffed at. I tell members what: as I have been out to police stations around the state, they have not stopped thanking our government, the McGowan government, for giving them that tool and resource. It has already made a huge difference at the front line.

Mr M.P. Murray: Member, don't forget she opposed the Capel Police Station.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: That is a very good point. According to the member for Scarborough, the Leader of the Opposition, Capel Police Station was not needed. She did not support it. She said for the area to be policed out of Bunbury. Later this month, we will open that Capel Police Station, we will have the officers there and we will police the area around Capel. Not only that, we have invested another \$1.5 million in the Collie Police Station and a similar amount in the Donnybrook Police Station.

Mr V.A. Catania interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member, are you supposed to be in the chamber? You seem to have a large amount of members here. Are you one of them?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Not only have we supported our police officers with resources, we have also supported them with legislation. We have brought in a "slow down; move over" legislation that many emergency services, including the WA Police Union, wanted prior to the last election—it is a commitment that they were unable to get from the former government—so we could get vehicles to slow down to 40 kilometres an hour where a police officer had pulled over a motorist. That is about officer safety, but the Liberal Party's leader did not support that. The government that opposition members were part of did not support it. It was one of the first things we did. We also got rid of the section 8 process—that undignified process. We have brought that legislation through; we have done it. We have also brought in legislation quickly for officers to deal with COVID.

In my criticism of the opposition side being a policy and strategy-free zone, I will at least say this for the member for Kalgoorlie: his was the only speech today with some positive suggestions. He actually had some ideas. He actually showed that he had thought about what could make things better. I do not agree with all the ideas he put forward. I think some have merit, and some of them we have already actioned. During this COVID time, we have brought some retired police officers back, member for Kalgoorlie. Some senior retired police officers have come back and been re-engaged as part of that COVID process. Of all the people we have heard from today, I have some understanding of that member.

The member for Hillarys put to the Commissioner of Police at his committee hearing today that violent crime had gone up. The commissioner told him that he was wrong. Why did he tell him he was wrong? He told him he was wrong because he was wrong. The commissioner quite clearly told the member for Hillarys that his assertion was incorrect. The fact of the matter is that burglaries are down by 60 per cent, car theft is down by 50 per cent and assaults are down by 20 per cent. These are huge figures, especially when they are contrasted to the all-time high point of crime in this state, 2016, when the Leader of the Opposition was the police minister. That is when high crime hit a peak. Under this government crime is at its lowest point in five years. Overall, crime is down by 29 000 fewer offences in 2019–20 compared with the situation in 2015–16. That is the former government's last year in office compared with our last completed financial year. There were 29 000 fewer offences. That is the record highlighted here today, much to the embarrassment of the Leader of the Opposition. When she was police minister, total crime went up by 17 per cent, crime against the person went up by 32 per cent and crime against property went up by 11.3 per cent, and today the Leader of the Opposition still did not have any idea. She did not have any policies.

Let us have a look at how good she is at detail. Let us look back to Monday, 25 January 2016 when there was an article in *The West Australian* with the heading "Harvey in burglary rate gaffe". Let us just see how good she is at the facts. The article was written by Daniel Emerson. It states —

Police Minister Liza Harvey was unrepentant yesterday —

Mrs L.M. Harvey: Where does he work now?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The Leader of the Opposition does not like me reading this out, does she?

Mrs L.M. Harvey: Where does he work now?

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, I do not think it has anything to do with the chamber, so I call you to order for the first time.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Wherever Mr Emerson does or does not work, it does not change the facts. It does not change what the Leader of the Opposition said. It was not just reported in *The West*; it was on TV. It was elsewhere. The Leader of the Opposition just does not like me reading this article out. Let us hear it —

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Police Minister Liza Harvey was unrepentant yesterday despite incorrectly telling West Australians this month that they made two-thirds of home burglaries easier by failing to lock up.

Mrs Harvey used the statistic as one of her chief lines of defence this month when confronted with the sixth consecutive month of double-digit crime growth, suggesting the figures were worse because of the public's carelessness.

That is the Leader of the Opposition blaming people whose houses were broken into—victim blaming. That was her only response. What did she say exactly? She said —

“What we know is that two-thirds of break-ins to homes occur through open doors and windows,” the minister said on January 6.

I think the Leader of the Opposition said that at a press conference, and more people than Mr Emerson heard her. She went on to say —

“So when you think about your home burglary stats, if those people had locked their doors and windows it's quite likely they would not have been targeted for a home burglary.”

She said that if two-thirds of people had only locked their doors and windows, they would not have been victims of crime. That was the leadership she showed as police minister of this state. The article from 25 January continues —

Yesterday, when launching a \$500,000 advertising campaign encouraging West Australians to lock up, Mrs Harvey revealed the official police statistic was 30 per cent entry through open doors and windows.

Member for Scarborough, 30 per cent is not two-thirds. If the Leader of the Opposition cannot get a simple figure like that right, can she get anything right? Can we believe a single thing she says? There are myriad articles from around that time. Since the Leader of the Opposition does not like what Daniel Emerson had to say, I have an article by Trevor Paddenburg and Phil Hickey. I do not think either Trevor or Phil now work for the government. The article has the headline “Clueless”. That is a bit of a harsh headline. Why would the Leader of the Opposition get a headline like that? Let us go. Here is the spin outlined by the article. It says —

SPIN 1: Going to the beach

Police Minister Liza Harvey this month blamed everyday West Australians who “head to the beach and occasionally forget to shut the window after letting the breeze in” for making their homes ... targets for burglars and fuelling the state's crime rate.

Another one reads —

SPIN 2: Lazy drivers and homeowners

Mrs Harvey went on to say that a third of home burglaries and theft from cars occurred “where doors and windows have been left unlocked or valuable items left in full view”.

The next one says —

SPIN 3: Serial offenders

In November, Mrs Harvey said prolific offenders were behind most home invasions and vowed to cut burglary rates by getting “these offenders off the streets and into prison”.

That did not happen. Then there was the spin on the tap-and-go-cards, also in November, when we were told that tap-and-go cards were the problem. At no point did the Leader of the Opposition actually say it was because they ignored the methamphetamine crisis that was driving crime; at no point did she say, “Actually, maybe our police model isn't working.” That model was known by the acronym MOM—metropolitan operating model. That policing model was not rolled out to country areas. I watched from the opposition, and we saw the crime rates in the city soar and crime rates in the country remain static or go down. There was one key difference between metropolitan WA and regional WA, and it was the Leader of the Opposition's crime model. It was the metropolitan operating model, under which she slashed the number of policing districts down to just four.

I turn to the issue of police numbers. There are a lot of furrphies here. The fact of the matter is that the Barnett–Harvey government went to the last election not promising a single extra police officer—not one single extra officer! It believed there were plenty. On the other hand, we made a number of commitments, including commitments to fund the regional enforcement unit for country roads and to put in place our meth border force to add additional officers for the 24-hour police stations. Since we have come to office, we have funded an additional 300 officers over and above attrition. The member for Kalgoorlie is quite right: it is not good enough just to cover attrition. That is why we have funded 300 additional officers over and above attrition. The number of police on the ground is up. A headcount on 30 June 2020 showed 280 more officers than in February 2017. Since then, hundreds have graduated

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from the police academy and hit the streets. Again, I think people will be pleased to hear this: currently, over 200 officers are in training at the academy—many more than we would need to cover attrition. The deployment of those officers is under constant review by the Commissioner of Police. I, too, want to put on record my thanks to the Commissioner of Police, his deputies, the assistants and all our police officers who have really stepped up during the COVID pandemic and done a magnificent job. They have managed to walk and chew gum at the same time. They have managed to deal with all the issues pertaining to COVID and they have kept up their regular policing duties.

Additional resources for police have been really significant. There has been a package of \$126.3 million to deal with COVID. An amount of \$91.2 million was announced in April 2020. There has been \$73.4 million for the recruitment of the additional 150 police officers; \$17.8 million to expand police tracking and tracing capabilities; \$14.8 million for 100 mobile intelligence cameras, also known as ANPR, or automatic numberplate recognition; \$3 million for the 200 GPS e-monitoring and tracking; and an additional \$35.1 million to meet additional operational costs for the Western Australia Police Force. We have put an additional \$400 million in the police budget, including \$90 million for police technology, including \$17.8 million for body-worn cameras, and funding for 40 drones. Again, we have seen their use in a range of situations. Police can utilise the speaker capacity of drones and they have been able to fly them over areas and give people warnings. In the early days of the COVID pandemic when people were asked to keep to a COVID distance, we were able to put that message to people on the beach—something that was not able to be done in other states. More recently, over the weekend, we saw our police helicopter and drones in the air in the search for the missing boy in the south west.

Given that this request for additional police officers is being made by a Liberal–National opposition, I wonder whether the opposition has been in touch with its federal counterparts to ask why we do not have more Australian Federal Police based here in Western Australia. Why do Queensland and other states have vastly more AFP officers than we have here? Why has Western Australia been given fewer Australian Defence Force personnel? Why are Australian Border Force officers really thin on the ground in Western Australia? Why does the Australian Crime Commission have such a minuscule footprint in this state? Peter Dutton is a Queensland, and when I look at a comparison between Queensland and WA, one might think they would be comparable, but they are not. Queensland gets deluxe federal resources compared with those in Western Australia. If the opposition wants to do something productive, rather than coming in here whingeing and making false claims, perhaps it could contact some of its National and Liberal colleagues at a federal level to see what they can do to help us get more federal assistance and get a fair share of the commonwealth resources to Western Australia.

I am going to highlight statistics from the most recent crime reports, since we have had some real furrphies put forward by members opposite today. The fact is, as I have already said, that crime peaked in this state back in 2016–17 when the Leader of the Opposition was the Minister for Police and Deputy Premier. The number of selected offences against personal property has decreased by 33 per cent for the 2020–21 financial year compared with 2019–20, and that is a decrease of 18.7 per cent in regional areas. There has been a 38.8 per cent decrease against the five-year average, and if we distil out the regional areas, it is a 23.4 per cent decrease in the regional areas against the five-year average.

Only this morning, the member for Hillarys tried to put some leading questions to the Commissioner of Police and, frankly, he was put in his place.

Mr P.A. Katsambanis interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Hillarys, you had a fair whack. Listen, please.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Frankly, he was put in his place. He said, “Isn’t it a fact that violent crime has gone up?” The commissioner told him that it is not. The fact is that our police commissioner has done an amazing job here. He has got rid of the opposition’s failed policing model. It is not just a matter of going to eight districts from four. He has put in place an additional regional operations group. Under the previous government, there was one north and one south ROG. We now have one central, one north and one south. He has brought to bear a lot of innovations. He has brought to the table his experience as CEO of the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission in Canberra for the best part of three years and added that to his former experience as a deputy Commissioner of Police here. I would like to amend the motion.

Amendment to Motion

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I move —

That all words after “house” be deleted and the following words be substituted —

commends the Western Australia Police Force, notes the reduction in crime and acknowledges the McGowan Labor government’s commitment of significant additional community safety resources to support frontline officers, which includes the fast-tracking of an additional 150 police officers and the expansion of police tracking and tracing capabilities.

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DR A.D. BUTI (Armadale) [3.49 pm]: I would like to speak on the amendment moved by the Minister for Police. Of course, when the member for Hillarys moved his motion about law and order he thought that he would make the headlines but, unfortunately, the member for Dawesville has made the headlines for the opposition today. I grant that the member for Dawesville has been able to get some headlines that other members of the opposition have been struggling to get over the last month, but given this morning's headlines, I am not so sure whether he would like to have another morning like this morning. The member for Dawesville said, "The Premier needs to man up. I didn't realise we elected a princess at the 2017 election." As members can imagine, Twitter has gone ballistic! At least the member for Dawesville got attention, but I am sure that he would have preferred to get attention in another way.

Mr Speaker, as you would know from sitting on the opposition benches as the member for Albany, I was always asking the former Minister for Police, who is now the Leader of the Opposition, when we could have a 24/7 police station in Armadale. I always received a no—no, no, no—because the minister was sticking religiously to her failed Frontline 2020 model. Armadale is a regional centre and its police station used to close at four o'clock on a weekday and it would not be open at all on the weekend. I brought to the attention of the then minister, now the Leader of the Opposition, the case of a young school girl in Roleystone who was sexually assaulted. Where is the member for Darling Range? She always seems to be missing nowadays. She does not seem to be —

Withdrawal of Remark

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Mr Speaker —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Okay, you can all have your say, but there is a point of order.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Mr Speaker, I believe that in the past you have ruled it unparliamentary for members to make remarks about whether a member of Parliament is in attendance in this place or otherwise.

The SPEAKER: I agree. Member for Armadale, I ask you to withdraw.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I withdraw.

Debate Resumed

Dr A.D. BUTI: The sexual assault occurred in Roleystone, which is in the Darling Range electorate. I brought it to the attention of the then Minister for Police that the father of this young female drove her to the Armadale Police Station just after four o'clock, about five or 10 minutes after. He pressed the buzzer because he was told that he still might be able to be attended to. No-one answered and he had to drive his daughter all the way to Cannington to make contact with the police. That is appalling. Under the Frontline 2020 model, the only major police station in the whole east metropolitan corridor that was open 24/7 was Cannington Police Station and it had to deal with everyone from this side of the Swan River past Armadale down to Boddington. The minister religiously came into this house and said that the 2020 model was the way we should be going. We now have a new police minister who listened to the concerns of her members and her constituents and police are now closer to the action. The work that the Minister for Police has done with the Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence in that area has been first class. Of course, that issue is very hard to overcome but at least we have policies that are trying to address the issue.

MR D.T. REDMAN (Warren–Blackwood) [3.53 pm]: The minister has obviously been found wanting. She has worded the amendment very carefully: "fast-tracking of an additional 150 police officers". The government is towards the end of its fourth year; sorry, the end of a four-year term —

Mrs M.H. Roberts: A Freudian slip!

Mr D.T. REDMAN: Yes.

There is an election in March next year so the minister has decided that she had better get to and fast-track an additional 150 police officers so that she has something to say to the community. What is happening on television now scares us and it scares the community and it will scare the government when it comes to the vote in March. In response to a question asked by the member for Geraldton just recently, the minister said that the government delivered an additional 300 police officers. I do not know where they are but I do know where they are not. They are not in goldfields–Esperance, because its complement is down by 20 officers. They are not in the great southern because its complement is down nearly six officers. They are not in the Kimberley because its complement is down 16 officers. They are not in the Pilbara, because its complement is down 13 officers. They are not in the south west because its complement is down 16 officers. They are not in the wheatbelt because its complement is down 17 officers. We know where they are not. They are not in regional Western Australia.

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In addition, earlier on in the week in response to a question asked by the member for Geraldton, the minister asked, “What did the National Party do at the last election? They didn’t invest any royalties for regions.” She went to roll out the old chestnut that all its members did was milk plastic cows and build singing toilets. It is the old chestnut, which is a debate for another day, but the National Party was part of a government that delivered a \$282 million package to increase Western Australia Police numbers by 550. We invested \$200 million into 400 new Government Regional Officers’ Housing houses in regional Western Australia. We invested \$120 million in the emergency services mobile network to improve emergency communications. We invested \$94.5 million in the WA Police community safety radio network. We also invested \$65.7 million in a district allowance for regional public servants, which included police officers. I know Harry Arnott because he was in Pemberton before he became the police union representative. He was very happy with that district allowance; in fact, he lobbied me extremely hard to support that. I know what he felt about that. I have not heard anything about the district allowance from this government. I do not know whether that has disappeared. It seems to have disappeared into the ether. We also invested \$10.5 million on regional police incentives program to attract police officers into hard-to-staff and hard-to-fill positions. We also contributed \$9.5 million towards the Carnarvon Police and Justice Complex. I remember that during my first term in opposition, this minister closed six regional police stations so she has form on that front. Having read the newspaper article with the latest numbers—*The West Australian* exposed it—the police are down on their complement in net terms and now the government is scratching away trying to deliver something to the community as it heads towards the next election so it is fast-tracking 150 police officers.

One last point before we go to the vote: the member for North West Central asked whether the government has done any sort of risk assessment on what has changed in regional Western Australia during the COVID crisis because a huge number of people are travelling around regional Western Australia. There were three tragic deaths at Mount Augustus recently. Those incidents took staff away from the Carnarvon police station, which is well and truly under complement. A whole range of issues emerge. The minister talks about the overall crime statistics. Sure, but other things come into play. Has the government done a risk assessment on what is happening in regional Western Australia during the COVID crisis, because some of the settings have fundamentally changed? This minister has not been up-front with the community. She has misled this house about what the last government did. She is also fast-tracking additional police officers so that she has some sort of agenda to deliver to the community as we go to the 13 March election.

Amendment (deletion of words) put and passed.

Division

Amendment (insertion of words) put and a division taken with the following result —

Ayes (32)

Ms L.L. Baker	Mr D.J. Kelly	Mr D.T. Punch	Mrs J.M.C. Stojkovski
Mr J.N. Carey	Mr F.M. Logan	Mr J.R. Quigley	Mr C.J. Tallentire
Mr R.H. Cook	Ms S.F. McGurk	Ms M.M. Quirk	Mr D.A. Templeman
Ms J.M. Freeman	Mr Y. Mubarakai	Mrs M.H. Roberts	Mr P.C. Tinley
Ms E.L. Hamilton	Mr M.P. Murray	Ms C.M. Rowe	Mr R.R. Whitby
Mr T.J. Healy	Mrs L.M. O’Malley	Ms R. Saffioti	Ms S.E. Winton
Mr M. Hughes	Mr P. Papalia	Ms A. Sanderson	Mr B.S. Wyatt
Mr W.J. Johnston	Mr S.J. Price	Ms J.J. Shaw	Mr D.R. Michael (<i>Teller</i>)

Noes (15)

Mr I.C. Blayney	Mr P.A. Katsambanis	Mr J.E. McGrath	Mr D.T. Redman
Mr V.A. Catania	Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup	Dr M.D. Nahan	Mr P.J. Rundle
Ms M.J. Davies	Mr S.K. L’Estrange	Mr D.C. Nalder	Mr A. Krsticevic (<i>Teller</i>)
Mrs L.M. Harvey	Mr R.S. Love	Mr K.M. O’Donnell	

Pairs

Ms J. Farrer	Dr D.J. Honey
Mr K.J.J. Michel	Mrs A.K. Hayden
Mr M. McGowan	Mr W.R. Marmion

Amendment thus passed.

Motion, as Amended

Question put and passed.

Extract from *Hansard*

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 23 September 2020]

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