

LAW AND ORDER — VIOLENT CRIME, BURGLARY AND ROBBERY

Matter of Public Interest

THE SPEAKER (Mr G.A. Woodhams): Members, today I received within the prescribed time a letter from the Leader of the Opposition in the following terms —

I wish to raise the following as a matter of public interest today.

“That the House —

Condemns the Barnett Government for its law and order failures especially in the areas of violent crime, burglary and robbery.”

If sufficient members agree to this motion, I will allow it.

[At least five members rose in their places.]

The SPEAKER: The matter can proceed.

MR E.S. RIPPER (Belmont — Leader of the Opposition) [3.44 pm]: I move —

That the house condemns the Barnett government for its law and order failures, especially in the areas of violent crime, burglary and robbery.

In the early years of any government, the government tends to be judged by its announcements. What we had from this government was a series of tough law and order media announcements. Those announcements were combined with completely fallacious vilification of Labor’s record on crime. During WA Labor’s period in government, there was a significant reduction in crime that worried the community, such as motor vehicle theft and home burglary. Now that the government has been in power for more than three years, the government will be judged not so much on its latest announcements as on whether the government is delivering on previous announcements and on what the outcomes for the community are. I know that the government will play with the overall figures, but playing with the overall figures does not help a community concerned about, for example, appalling attacks on seniors. There have been a huge number of these appalling attacks on seniors.

Let us think about, for example, the case of Sidney Brady, 89. He is described in *The Sunday Times* as a “gentle grandfather who spent his days playing violin in his retirement village home”. He suffered serious injury when he was repeatedly beaten over the head with a weapon believed to be a dumbbell during a home invasion. The report in *The Sunday Times* had the following statement—

Police described it as one of the most sickening and sinister attacks they had seen.

Mr Brady was house-sitting at his daughter’s Grand Promenade duplex when at least three men smashed their way into the home, ripping the front door from its hinges ...

That is the type of attack and the type of appalling brutality that our community is particularly concerned about. That article in *The Sunday Times* listed in a sidebar some of the other attacks that have occurred: Bee Chan Mong, 68, and her husband, Kah Lok Hor, 73, were bashed by three men who raided their Maylands home; Mario Pesce, 74, and his 70-year-old wife, Tina, were brutally bashed in their Wanneroo Road home; and disabled pensioner Kelvin McCagh feared for his life after being assaulted and robbed during his morning walk in Armadale. Those are just some of the examples that seriously concern our community.

Then we go to the terrible situation on our trains, particularly on the train that runs out through the south eastern corridor and eventually reaches Armadale. There was the brutal assault at Beckenham on transit guards. There was the appalling situation at the Burswood station. What was the initial response of the Minister for Transport? Remarkably, the minister canvassed the idea of closing down the train line, taking away the service from all those law-abiding citizens and surrendering to the activity of criminals. It was a pathetic initial reaction from the Minister for Transport, because it was a pathetic surrender of the state’s authority to the activities of criminals.

We saw another remarkable reaction from a government agency to the security problems on the south eastern train line. A mother whose eight-year-old child was riding home from school on the train was dobbed into the child protection authorities, and the child protection authorities counselled her because they were not confident about the security on the train line. What an appalling thing that a woman has an encounter with Child Protection because the government cannot deliver security on the train line sufficient to satisfy the child protection authorities.

In our discussions on these issues, we often talk about the problems confronting seniors, but think about the situation of young people. Entertainment areas are not safe. There are far too many bashings outside licensed establishments. Inside licensed establishments, there are far too many appalling examples of glassings. When

these young people go home, there is no security on the trains. If they take a taxi instead, the taxis have become a very, very dodgy proposition, particularly for young women going home on their own. So this issue certainly affects elderly people, but it is also a very big issue for our young people, and it is being driven in part by amphetamine use that is out of control. More than 150 drug laboratories have been discovered this year. This is a serious issue, and surely the government itself must be starting to feel that the whole issue of clan labs is out of control.

What we are feeling now is the effect of broken promises by the government on law and order. What we are feeling now is the exhaustion of the tough-on-crime rhetoric. What we are feeling now is the end of the sustainability of the government's approach to law and order. Let us have a look at one of those broken promises: the promise for 500 extra police substituted with 350 extra police and 150 auxiliary officers. Let us have a look at the promise to increase the number of police in the public transport division. The number of police in the public transport division was actually cut from 96 to 88. Today we had the Premier out there calling for an increased number of police in the public transport division. What a laugh! The Premier called for his broken promise to now be unbroken; he called on his own government to unbreak the promise that his own government had broken. The Premier is in government now. He cannot behave as he did when he was opposition leader. He cannot make the call; he either does or he does not. Then the Minister for Police came in here at question time and, in the face of that four-year promise for increased police in the public transport division, he announced a four-week operation. A four-week operation is not the delivery of a four-year promise. Again, I do not think that that is the initiative of the Minister for Police; I think that is an operational decision by the Commissioner of Police—once again, the only person in the arena on the government side who appears to be displaying leadership on law and order issues. I support Operation Rail Safe—let me make it clear; I support Operation Rail Safe—but it is not the delivery of the promise that the government made, and it is a four-week operation, not a four-year operation.

We have a government committed to press conferences and committed to announcements but which does everything it can to avoid accountability for delivery. We have had a raft of law and order announcements in the last little while. It has become a routine. The government delivers a drop to *The Sunday Times*, with no detail, and expects the debate to occur without anyone being able to see the detail. Then there is no urgency about bringing the matters on for debate. The Parliament is going to get up in two weeks. If these things are so urgent, have the Parliament sit a few more weeks and deal with them. But, no, the government would much rather have those things sitting there, debate them next year, make a few more announcements and have a few more press conferences, and get them in so late in the parliamentary term that there will never be an opportunity to judge the government on its delivery, to hold it accountable for the implementation, and to match its words against the outcomes. So we have a government that is committed to press conferences but is not committed to, not effective in and not smart in actually tackling the crime that people are worried about. The Minister for Police, the Attorney General and the Premier will be held accountable by the community for having talked tough on crime and then three years later being found absolutely wanting as out-of-control violence engulfs our entertainment areas and our transport system.

MR J.R. QUIGLEY (Mindarie) [3.54 pm]: Just picking up on that thread of the honourable Leader of the Opposition that the government makes press announcements and then avoids accountability, there can be no greater example of that than the prostitution reform bill. The government came in and promised that it would get mini-brothels and prostitution out of the suburbs. It introduced a bill, and then made an exception for any brothel existing during the term of government, so that we know that by the end of the term of government, zero will have happened. There is an 18-month exemption. For anyone who is already a criminal in breach of section 190 of the Criminal Code, that will continue. And it is to be remembered that it was the honourable police minister who, when sitting on this side of the chamber, three years ago, said, "If I ever became the police minister, I would order the commissioner to enforce the law." What hollow words! He has done no such thing. He has sat by and watched his Attorney General introduce a law and say, "We will go about prostitution reform in this way, but we won't bring it into effect until after this term of government and into the next Parliament when we won't have to be held accountable."

It has been said that there are lies, lies and then damned statistics, so that on top of these press releases, in which the government talks it up and talks hard, it introduces statistics to try to blind the public. We can forget all those charts that the Attorney General comes in here and flashes around every question time. We have only to take a snapshot from the Western Australia Police site to realise that if we compare August 2010 with August 2011, murder is up by 50 per cent; domestic assaults are up by nearly 35 per cent; robbery on businesses is up by 33 per cent; and robbery on non-businesses is up by 30 offences. This is an absolute con. Government members come into this place and hold up these charts. The chart in my hand shows that the rate of imprisonment is going up and the number of offences is falling, but they are starting to climb and coincide again, because the criminals

cannot be kept inside forever. Under the policy of refusing parole, of course there will be an initial dip in offending, but after three or four years when these criminals have served their finite terms, they will be released back into the community, and now we can see what is happening. There is a rise in crime across those violent offences—those offences that are committed by recidivist criminals who have been hardened in jail. The figures for homicides, bigger domestic assaults and robberies on businesses are all climbing, and climbing across the five-year average. Domestic assaults across the five-year average have risen by 11.5 per cent; business robberies have risen by 86 per cent. It is just scandalous.

The only way to get on top of crime is to have more police on the streets to catch more criminals. That is the only answer—not to get down in the fern garden on Wednesday or in the backyard on Saturday or Sunday afternoon and say, “We’re going to be tough.” The only way is to put more police on the streets—not auxiliary police, but more proper police on the streets who can effectively police and lock up criminals. Let us look at the chart in my hand. We have the line of imprisonment and we have the line of offences. What is missing from this chart is the Armadale line. That is the line the government wants to wipe out because too many offences are being committed on the Armadale train line. Why? It is because, in its election promises, the government promised to put more police on trains and failed to do so, and now the Armadale line has become very dangerous because of the government’s delinquency in its election commitments—its absolute delinquency to commitment—by failing to put those police on the Armadale line. The government’s response was, “Well, let’s close the line.” The Premier has had to grab the Minister for Transport by the ear and say, “Doing that, Gunga Din, absolutely proves the case against us. So, we’ve got to come up with some other scheme. Let’s police the line for four weeks.” What a disgrace.

MS M.M. QUIRK (Girrawheen) [4.00 pm]: A few weeks ago I attended a meeting in Fremantle. It was a meeting of a group called Justice First. I was the only member of Parliament present. Most of those present had a personal experience with crime and either they or their loved ones were victims of crime. Among them was the courageous Ellen Rowe, whose husband died after a vicious assault on a beach in Geraldton amidst family Christmas celebrations. At this meeting Mrs Rowe recounted how she had become a victim of a system in which those most closely affected by crime are marginalised and ignored. In her case she heard from a report in the media that the charges against her husband’s assailant were to be downgraded.

The son of James Richardson, the convenor of the group, was killed in another senseless act of violence. James had to battle with prosecutors to ensure that a backup charge was laid. It was put on the indictment at the eleventh hour and the offender was ultimately convicted of that charge. Therefore, but for James’ persistence, that offender would have been acquitted. After being cast aside in the whole prosecution process, James recounts that he was contacted when the offender was nearing the end of his very short sentence and asked whether he would be prepared to assist in the offender’s rehabilitation process.

Others at the meeting also recounted their ongoing victimisation through the justice system, including one case in which a victim of serious assault had difficulty in accessing funds already awarded as criminal injuries compensation to enable major dental work to be undertaken to fix substantial damage caused by the assault. Consistent themes of this meeting were frustration with Director of Public Prosecutions’ officers; charge bargaining; lack of communication from police and prosecutors; being kept in the dark; the court process often appearing uncaring about the impact on victims; and the ongoing struggle with post-traumatic stress. When government members get up in this place and arrogantly boast about how well the government is dealing with crime, it demonstrates that the government just does not get it. There is a dissonance between the way in which the government asserts our criminal justice system operates and what occurs in reality. For every criminal statistic there is a story of a victim; thankfully not all those stories are as stark as Ellen’s and James’ stories.

The complacency and conceit of the Barnett government provides those affected by violence with little comfort or reassurance. One such group of victims are those caught up in business robberies. Every morning when we turn on our radios and listen to the news, we hear about another robbery that has occurred overnight. Figures prepared by police and obtained under freedom of information legislation show that the five-year financial year to date figures for business robbery has increased by 86 per cent. As we have heard, between July 2010 and 2011 it increased by more than 100 per cent. There was a 33 per cent increase between August 2010 and August 2011 and a 100 per cent increase between September 2010 and September 2011. When these robberies occur, there is a tendency to think that as they are businesses they are insured and there will be no long-term harm; however, nothing can be further from the truth. Small businesses are already doing it hard. There has been a loss of consumer confidence and massive increases in utility costs.

Australian Institute of Criminology research has identified a number of likely outcomes for businesses that are victim to robberies. Businesses that have been robbed put in place a range of measures as a consequence of experiencing this crime. One in 20 businesses increased prices to compensate for losses; borrowed money to

finance the purchase of security measures; and introduced staff training. One in 25 businesses borrowed money to keep the business afloat; paid for employee counselling; and changed their hours of operation. We should also consider the psychological impact to not only business owners but also their staff. More than half of businesses reported that their staff felt fearful after the event; one-third reported nightmares and flashbacks. Major psychological and financial problems are experienced as the result of business robberies. This is just one aspect of the way in which the government fails to handle crime in our streets and suburbs.

There clearly needs to be a police presence on our streets. Increasing the prospect of being apprehended is the best deterrent. The government has broken its election promise of supplying an additional 500 police officers. It is short-changing the people of Western Australia by recruiting only 350 police officers. It is lying to the WA public when it says that downgrading the remaining 150 to auxiliary officers will not make an operational difference. If we want evidence of the effectiveness of a strong police presence, we need to look no further than the fact that the strong police presence at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting led to a reduction in crime. Overall, there was an 8.4 per cent decrease in crime. Although I congratulate Western Australia Police for its efforts at CHOGM above and beyond the call of duty, perhaps WA deserves the same attention as the 53 foreign heads of state. The Commissioner of Police yesterday conceded before a Legislative Council committee that similar results could be achieved across the board with an escalation in resources.

In conclusion, I want to take members on a trip down memory lane —

We are seeing violent attacks inside and outside nightclubs and pubs; violent random attacks, particularly at night; and we are now seeing violent attacks against innocent people in broad daylight. In the latest incident, young children and babies were involved. This is happening on the Minister for Police's watch. I know what he will say: "It's not me; it's nothing to do with me. You're getting all the figures wrong and everything's wrong." It has reached the situation now that people are afraid to walk the streets. I would not let my kids go into Northbridge at night-time. I advise them not to go to any hot spot, even those in my electorate, at night-time. People who go to Sorrento Quay and Hillarys marina late on Friday and Saturday nights could be attacked. People are being bashed senseless and are dying because of the violent attacks against them, and this state government is doing absolutely nothing.

That was a statement by the current Minister for Police, the member for Hillarys, in September 2007. I pose the obvious question: how is it that when in opposition the member for Hillarys asserted that the Minister for Police bears some responsibility for the failure to do anything about violent crime, but now when he is in government and holds the police portfolio, he not only accepts no responsibility, but denies that it is even happening?

MR R.F. JOHNSON (Hillarys — Minister for Police) [4.08 pm]: What absolute hypocrisy we hear today! I could not believe it when I saw the matter of public interest and the motion that it contained. The motion reads, in part —

... condemns the Barnett government for its law and orders failures, especially in the areas of violent crime, burglary and robbery.

I thought, "That is absolute hypocrisy." Let me tell the member for Girrawheen that the number of crimes reported in 2010–11, although higher than for 2009–10—there was a blip and I accept that—still remains lower than the number reported in the last year of the Labor government.

Ms M.M. Quirk: But it is going up.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: It is lower than the last year of Labor. In 2010–11, a total of 184 583 offences were reported, including burglary, motor vehicle theft, arson and property damage. If we compare this to Labor's last year in government, 2007–08, we see that under Labor a total of 210 152 offences were reported. This amounts to a more than 12 per cent drop in offences during our term in government. Quite frankly, that is more than 25 500 fewer victims of crime under the Liberal–National government. When I say "hypocrisy", I mean "hypocrisy". The member for Girrawheen is very good at digging out old press releases and comments from *Hansard* in Parliament. I have to say; I am not too bad myself. I have been going through some of the information that came out during Labor's years. In August 2007 *The West Australian* carried the headline "State hit over rise in violent crime". That occurred during the Labor years—2007. The article reads —

Police statistics revealing a 111 per cent jump in aggravated sexual assaults and nearly 50 per cent increase in violent bashings were seized on by Opposition Leader Paul Omodei —

As he was at the time. It says further on —

The monthly statistics show reports of aggravated assaults have risen from 4252 when Labor came into power in 2000–01 to 6323 last financial year, while reports of aggravated sexual assaults increased from 1380 to 2911.

Speaker; Mr Eric Ripper; Mr John Quigley; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Christian Porter; Dr Tony Buti

That shows members what happened under the then Labor government in 2007. The article contains a lovely little graph—not written by me or the Attorney General; it is one of *The West Australian's*, and I have to say that it is very good. It is headed, “Out of Control”.

Mr M.P. Murray interjected.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: That was while the member for Collie–Preston was in government.

Mr M.P. Murray: You're in trouble.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The member for Collie–Preston is in trouble. Let me tell him why. People will see this; they will remember what it was like under his government, when he was soft on crime and soft on drugs. They know exactly what he was like and that is why they do not trust him or believe him.

Let me read another article from *The West Australian* in September 2007, which is headed “Police crime figures contradict Minister”—not this minister, the former Minister for Police. It also states —

The Carpenter Government's record on law and order has slumped to a new low after official police figures revealed crime was on the rise in WA and every police officer was now responsible for 57 more people than when Labor came to power in 2001.

It says further on —

The decline in police numbers per person was reflected in an across-the-board rise in crime, including a 30 per cent surge in aggravated burglaries (1535) and an increase in reported sexual assaults, assaults, threatening behaviour and deprivation of liberty.

It states further on again —

But despite the official police data appearing to confirm the Government is losing its fight to reduce crime, Police Minister John Kobelke again chose to focus on a more favourable five-year snapshot provided in an Office of Crime Prevention report tabled in Parliament last week.

Of course, the Office of Crime Prevention was contained within the Department of the Premier and Cabinet under former Premier Carpenter. I prefer the police statistics, quite frankly, to anything the then Premier might have come out with. Let me read another headline from *The West Australian* of August 2006 written by Luke Eliot, “Knife crime rises with macho culture”. Again, that occurred under the Labor government. We saw an increase in not only bashings, burglary and theft but also knife crimes. It reads —

Crimes involving knives jumped almost 40 per cent between the 2004–05 and 2005–06 financial years—a sharp spike blamed on a macho culture plaguing Perth streets and popular entertainment precincts.

It goes on to say —

Police statistics showed aggravated assaults involving knives rose more than 40 per cent and threats involving knives more than 50 per cent.

This article is referring to crime in entertainment areas.

Mr M.P. Murray interjected.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Members opposite refused to back the government's legislation to allow police to carry out a stop-and-search policy when people were suspected of carrying knives in entertainment areas. The people in Perth have the member for Collie–Preston and all his colleagues on that side of the house to thank for the fact that more people carry knives today than have ever done. He refused to support stop-and-search laws, which would have caught those people.

The following was a great headline when the member for Collie–Preston was in government in 2006. I am going backwards here. It reads, “WA now bash, burglary capital of Australia”. That is the reputation the member for Collie–Preston's government gave to WA nationwide. We were called the bash, burglary capital of Australia. They were the figures that were relevant at the time throughout all the states —

Mr M.P. Murray: Now we are the crack centre of Australia.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: No, we are not. We deal with this. The member for Collie–Preston should ask members of the public who they trust when it comes to law and order. I will tell him what, his government comes very second rate; he comes right down the totem pole.

Mr A.J. Waddell: Is that what your polling shows?

Speaker; Mr Eric Ripper; Mr John Quigley; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Christian Porter; Dr Tony Buti

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: They do not trust members opposite on law and order at all.

Mr A.J. Waddell: Is that why you're beating up everything?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: No; we do not have to beat up anything, my friend. We know that the member for Forrestfield knows that the public is saying that his party is a spent force. When it comes to law and order, the public have no confidence in him whatsoever.

Let us just read one or two other articles. Another headline reads "Violence soars in Perth nightspots". That is not this week, not this year and not last year. When was it? Oh, it was in March 2008. Who was in government then? Those people opposite were in government then.

Mr M.P. Murray: Have you fixed it?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Yes; we have certainly curbed it, my friend, more than the member for Collie–Preston ever did. The article under that headline reads —

Perth's main entertainment hubs are far more dangerous than five years ago, with fresh figures revealing huge increases in the number of assaults in Northbridge, Burswood and the city.

The statistics, compiled for *The West Australian* by WA Police, contradict frequent claims by the State Government that violence is not growing in the city's nightlife areas.

Northbridge had a whopping 66 per cent increase in reported non-domestic assaults from 2003 to the end of last year, while Burswood (249 per cent) and the CBD (23 per cent) also had big rises.

That was not a quote from me; that was an article written by Ronan O'Connell of *The West Australian*.

Several members interjected.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: He is a very highly esteemed journalist with *The West Australian*. They were his comments, not mine. That is what he said in March 2008.

An opposition member: *The West Australian* was a mouthpiece for the Liberal Party.

Mr E.S. Ripper: They were very impartial!

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I think Ronan O'Connell is quite a good friend of the member for Girrawheen. That is fine but that is what he said. That was his report in 2008. He got that right.

Mr J.R. Quigley interjected.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: It was about the member for Mindarie.

I will read one more article, which I think is relevant. It was written back in 2006.

Mr J.R. Quigley: In 1953!

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: This was back in April 2006; the member for Mindarie hates it when the truth comes home to roost. The headline reads, "Violence against nurses an epidemic". That was under the member for Mindarie's government, when the then Attorney General, Hon Jim McGinty, was also the Minister for Health. These offences were all happening while members opposite were on watch. Quite frankly, I will repeat one more time: they should do a survey and talk to people even in their electorates, which are predominantly Labor electorates. I talk to people in their electorates. I have to tell them that they do not trust them when it comes to law and order.

Mr M. McGowan: You closed the police station in Rockingham. You opened it and now you have closed it.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: We never opened one in the member for Rockingham's electorate.

Mr M. McGowan: Of course you did.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: When?

Mr M. McGowan: The Rockingham transit station and the Rockingham Police Station. You opened it and now you have closed it.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: No, no; we have not closed it.

Mr M. McGowan: Oh. It doesn't have any staff.

Mr E.S. Ripper: You just do not staff it.

Speaker; Mr Eric Ripper; Mr John Quigley; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Christian Porter; Dr Tony Buti

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: That is another furphy. The member for Rockingham's government wanted to see all those officers along the Mandurah line. We found that there was very little crime on the Mandurah line, but there were all those allocated officers. Crime is rife on the Armadale line —

Mr M. McGowan interjected.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: We have not closed the station; it will be used for police purposes.

Mr M. McGowan: It's not going to be used for anything.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Yes, it is.

Mr M. McGowan: What?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I will tell the member in the fullness of time.

Mr M. McGowan: In about five years' time you'll put some boxes in there.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: No, no, no. I will tell him. We made sure those officers moved from there into the city where they can respond much quicker to violent crime on the Armadale and Midland lines and anywhere else.

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Members opposite are very lucky. The people on the member for Mandurah's line do not suffer from the violence and criminal activity that occurs on the Armadale line.

Mr D.A. Templeman: You are going to take them away from the Mandurah line; that's what you're doing.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: No, no; we are not. They will be there as quick as a flash. By being based in the city, they can go anywhere very quickly as a rapid response team to deal with crime. That is what this government does.

Mr M. McGowan: It'll be devastating in my electorate.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I know; I know.

That is what this government does; we actually deal with the issue. We get to grips with it and that is why the people in WA trust us when it comes to law and order. They trust us when we make a promise —

Mr E.S. Ripper: They have great confidence in you, don't they?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Yes, they do. They do not have much confidence in you, my friend.

Do members remember Sandie Shaw? She sang *Puppet on a String*. The opposition's upper house colleague Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich really was being the puppet yesterday for the member for Girrawheen. The member for Girrawheen was sending messages with her iPad to get Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich to ask questions. The trouble is that they were lost in translation, so the committee member did not ask the right questions and she did not know what page she was looking at. Quite frankly, I have to say that, apart from the nonsense of it all, I think it is an abuse of parliamentary procedure when a member in this house tries to use a member in the other house to dictate what is going on.

Several members interjected.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The member was using her electronic iPad to get the member —

Several members interjected.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Exactly! The committee member did not understand the question so she could not ask the question properly. I think it is an abuse that that member should go to a parliamentary committee hearing and try to dictate to another member of Parliament on the parliamentary committee and influence that parliamentary committee in some way as to what it should be asking the Commissioner of Police and other senior officers.

Several members interjected.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: That is the trouble; members opposite have no standards in the Labor Party! We have seen that over many, many years—no standards whatsoever. I think the public realises that and it will certainly realise that coming up to the next election.

MR M.P. MURRAY (Collie–Preston) [4.21 pm]: I rise to put a country spin on the issue of crime and crime prevention. I was surprised to hear at the upper house Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations hearing this week that only \$253 000 has been put across from the Department of Agriculture and Food to the police to help with rural crime, especially stock theft. That very appalling amount of money is causing problems out there that are running into millions and millions of dollars.

Last week when I put out a press release on this issue, I got calls from people north of Meekatharra, south to Albany and even close to me at Darkan. I will use the call from Darkan as an example. These people have been absolutely picked over by the people who have been pinching their sheep. Since 2008, they have lost 1 091 sheep. I am sure that the Premier would very quickly work that out in dollars and understand that cost. The problem is that we had a stock squad, but now we do not. We have private citizens going about their business trying to do the job of a policeman. They are not able to do that. When people report stock theft to the police, they are told that there is only one constable, Ms Emma Needs, in this state to deal with stock theft—the minister is starting to walk out but he needs to listen to this. What a disgrace this has been! What a real, real rub in the face of country people who thought this government would look after them, especially with royalties for regions. People are just stealing stock left, right and centre. The people in Darkan who lost 1 091 sheep reported the theft and were told that they would have to come back in three weeks because the police officer was on holiday. Over time the evidence is lost, life goes on and they were told, “Forget about that now; I don’t think we can chase it up.” That is an absolute blight on the system at the moment—it really is. These people are beside themselves, having lost hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of sheep. If the McDonald’s or the local bank had been knocked off, police would be swarming all over the place. But what happens in rural areas? Nothing! They are told, “Go back; I think they must’ve got lost in the bush. Someone’s cut the fences and let them out.” That is just not good enough for country areas. The issue of stock theft is huge and still goes on. It really grieves me to think that these people—I have the report numbers here with me; they spoke to a Sergeant Mick Williams—were fobbed off and told, “Look, we don’t think we can help you. I think it’s your imagination; you haven’t really lost those sheep.” Farmers out there know the difference down to one or two sheep. Again, I am sure the Premier can count his 100—he would know that. He would count them on weekends —

Mr C.J. Barnett: I know them by name!

Mr M.P. MURRAY: Exactly right, and when a lamb was missing, the Premier would be looking for it.

Why are these people being treated this way? Why do we not have proper police on this job, rather than just inspectors with only a public servant’s ability to chase up the sheep?

Given the shortness of time, I will be quick. The other thing is a lack of planning in the Capel area for population growth of around 5 000 people. They have been asking for a new police station, but not one is being planned for the future—not one—yet the area has huge growth. The district believes that 30 minutes is an appropriate response time. Hoons can get out there, rev their cars up and down the street and do what they like knowing that they have a 30-minute start. That is not good enough.

There are not enough police officers in the country. Regional centres are okay, but the outskirts miss out. Come on! We need the extra police that were promised on the ground. They are not there, we are not getting the policing we want and that is probably the biggest issue in my electorate.

MR C.C. PORTER (Bateman — Attorney General) [4.25 pm]: I thank members for their contributions. We hear some unusual things in the law and order debate. I thought I might commence today by talking about one of the more unusual things I have read. It was in the *Melville City Herald*, which I pick up at my local takeaway place every now and then. It is from the Saturday, 29 October edition, so it was, in effect, published after the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting had pretty much completed its main functions and duties. The paper unfortunately made comments about the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (Special Powers) Act, and, indeed, predicted the sorts of things we would see in the streets of Western Australia pursuant to the CHOGM legislation, and then it was published the day after CHOGM finished. Therefore, its predictions were published the day after CHOGM finished. It stated that there was “something inherently rotten to the core” about the legislation. It stated —

... We are all familiar with these sorts of powers: We see them in historical footage and movies about Soviet Russia, East Germany and other similarly seedy regimes.

People taken to rooms in the dead of night, ordered not to tell anyone about their interrogation. Citizens herded through checkpoints, forced to hand over identity papers in order to ride a train or a bus.

People stopped by agents of the State and interrogated about their movements, what they’re doing and why.

Unfortunately, as predictive analysis goes, it did not even have the good sense to remain a prediction; it predicted it after it had all finished! Of course, none of those things actually happened. I am sure that a few citizens of the state were checked for tickets when riding a train or bus, but none of that sort of stuff happened. It went on to state —

Speaker; Mr Eric Ripper; Mr John Quigley; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Christian Porter; Dr Tony Buti

Up to 50 WA citizens—our friends, family members and neighbours—have been forbidden from entering their own city during CHOGM, —

Mr M.P. Whitely: That's true.

Mr C.C. PORTER: Three blocks of it. It continued —

told they pose a “serious threat to persons or property”. The hollow nature of this “threat” is demonstrated by the fact one of those issued a letter was Sean Gransch, a forest protestor with no history of violence.

Obviously, all those predictions of doom and gloom and the Stasi taking people from their beds in the middle of the night during CHOGM did not actually happen. It is indicative of some of the odd things that people say when it comes to law and order debate and legislation. This motion —

Mr M. McGowan: Who said it?

Mr C.C. PORTER: It was the editorial on the front page of the *Melville City Herald*.

Several members interjected.

Mr C.C. PORTER: That is no excuse—this is a —

Mr M. McGowan: So are you going to stop going to that takeaway now?

Mr C.C. PORTER: No. It is a great takeaway; I am just going to pick up my local version of the same august publication.

Several members interjected.

Mr C.C. PORTER: It is an organisation that could do with some graphs! I think that is fair to say.

This motion condemns the Barnett government for its law and order failures, especially in the areas of violent crime, burglary and robbery. I think that needs to be examined just a little. What actually constitutes a failure in law and order? I would have thought that the basic failure in law and order is crime rates going up rather than going down. Indeed, that was one of the things that the Minister for Police mentioned when quoting an article about a former police minister. The former police minister at the time preferred statistics that took a slightly longer snapshot over a period of three to five years, I think it was, and those statistics are generally better statistics. Under Labor, crime over the long haul of that government in eight years decreased, and that is something to be very pleased about and proud of. Under this government's law and order policies, total rates of crime have also been decreasing at a slightly faster rate over the period we have been in government. Again, that is something to be happy about.

Mr E.S. Ripper: How does our situation and the trend here compare with other states?

Mr C.C. PORTER: That is an interesting question. We have some difficulties compared with other states, many of them to do with our Indigenous population. If we look at other states that have similar population demographics and complexities, we are broadly comparable with Queensland and the Northern Territory. Those two states have also experienced relative decreases in overall rates of crime. Victoria and Tasmania are each completely different jurisdictions again. We compare favourably with other jurisdictions, but not in all categories.

The central point is this: if this government, as the Leader of the Opposition asserts, has failed in the area of violent crime, burglary and robbery, what is the evidence of that? On the best accepted figures of those three offences—violent crime, burglary and robbery—in 2006–07 there were 13 908 assaults and in the last financial year, 2010–11, there were 13 048 assaults. That is near-on a decrease of 900 assaults over that period. In 2006–07, there were 38 137 offences of burglary—this is dwelling and non-dwelling—and in 2010–11, last year, there were 35 555 offences of burglary, which again is a very significant decrease. The other category named in the motion was robbery. In 2006–07, there were 221 robberies on businesses; in 2010–11, there were 177, which is a significant decrease. In 2006–07, there were 1 799 robberies not on businesses; in 2010–11, there were 1 618. In each of the very crime categories nominated in the opposition's motion, which is supposed to show a failure on the part of the present government, crime has decreased. That is a good thing. It decreased steadily under the previous government; it has been decreasing slightly more steadily under this government. Well done to both governments. The figures for crime decreases are lumpy and have to be measured over time.

That data has to be taken in the context that the population of WA is growing at a very healthy rate. The 2009 data is probably some of the best that we have, even though it is a little old now. There was a 3.1 per cent increase in population growth, with 1 400 people a week coming into Western Australia. We think that figure is getting closer to 2 000 people a week coming into Western Australia to live, to stay and to be employed. When

there are near-on 2 000 people a week coming into this jurisdiction and we are still able to steadily decrease overall rates of crime—not rates of crime per capita, but the absolute total rates of crime—that is a very significant achievement of any government. I applaud the former Labor government for its achievements in that area. I think we are doing slightly better than it did, through a different mix of policies. Nevertheless, for any modern western democratic government in a high population growth state to decrease crime over a 10 to 15-year period is a very impressive result and one that is ultimately good for the citizens of the state that it is governing. The problem with this debate is that motions such as this, condemning the government for its law and order failures, especially in violent crime, burglary and robbery, when all of the data shows that in those three categories crime is going down, feed into the nonsensical debate that happens too often, which is designed to drive fear into the hearts of the public. Some commentators call it moral panic.

Mr P. Papalia: How ironic.

Mr C.C. PORTER: The member for Warnbro laughs, but I have read just about every statement the member has made on this issue—no doubt as he has with statements I have made. I actually think that in our public statements both of us have been relatively modest, particularly in recognition of this idea that we should not tell people that things are worse than they are.

Mr P. Papalia: I was laughing in relation to your colleague who spoke earlier.

Mr C.C. PORTER: It is very important in this debate to not tell people that things are worse than they are. If we do that and people ultimately believe that, we will get the types of policies that many people on the opposite side of the house detest. Some of those policies, I must say from my own observation, work quite well. Nevertheless, there is no merit in convincing people that things are worse than they are. That is not to say that people's objections to prevailing and existing rates of crime are unwarranted. My own observation is that, notwithstanding that over the past 10 or 15 years crime rates have been steadily decreasing, when people perceive that crime rates are worse than they have ever been, they are doing a number of things: they are not comparing data from this year with data from three, four or five years ago; they are comparing their experiences and those of their parents and relatives to experiences on a much longer time frame—20 or 30 years ago. That is the type of mental comparison that people make on the overall rates of crime.

It is also the case, most unfortunately, that the categories of crime that both sides of politics have found it hardest to make inroads into are high visibility, high-impact crimes on individuals and their families. The types of crimes that have not decreased as fast as other types of crime have been assaults, the types of low level antisocial behaviour—type offences and the types of offences that we hear people talking about having happened to their cousin's kids in Northbridge on a Saturday night. These are things that are very immediate. I add to that list invasions of personal homes. We have had some success with that type of crime, but the rates are still too high. People are doing two things. They are comparing crime rates now to a very long-run view of crime rates in 1979 and 1981. Perth, Western Australia, is a fundamentally different place than it was at that time. The fact remains that over the past 10 or 15 years on any reasonable measure crime rates have been steadily going down as an absolute figure during a time in which our population has been increasing very, very rapidly.

I will give members an example of how people's perceptions are formed immediately. We had some examples of some horrific assaults committed on elderly members of our community. Those assaults are absolutely unacceptable on any measure, and without doubt there are too many of them. It is not unsurprising that they garner a massive amount of media attention. Based on all that media attention, I am sure that many members of this house, as many members of the public do, might end up with a view that seniors in our community are at a very high risk of assault. That actually is not the case. Assaults on seniors are horrific and we must do absolutely everything we can to punish people who perpetrate those offences and to reduce the overall numbers. In the 2010 calendar year, in only three per cent of all reported domestic assault offences the victim was aged over 60. For all of the non-domestic assaults that were committed in 2010—these are assaults that we read about in the newspaper and see on the news—in only four per cent of the instances of a common garden variety assault was the victim aged over 60. Members might be left with the impression—I am sure that many people are—that the percentage of seniors who are the victim of all assaults is much higher than three or four per cent. It is actually low. Those figures can and should be reduced, but they are rather low. When we look at the first part of 2011, in which there have been some very high-profile incidents of attacks on seniors in our community, those figures have decreased. So the number of domestic assaults on seniors has gone down from three per cent to 2.4 per cent and the number of non-domestic assaults on seniors has gone down from four per cent to three per cent. Although it is very early days, we are having some success in that particular category of offence. I make the point that those categories of offence which have the most immediate impact on people, which create a sense of disorder, and which poison people's view of criminal justice generally, have been traditionally very difficult categories of offence to decrease.

Speaker; Mr Eric Ripper; Mr John Quigley; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr Mick Murray; Mr
Christian Porter; Dr Tony Buti

Another thing that two successive governments have had a great deal of success with is motor vehicle theft. Back in 2001–02 there were 12 276 offences. In 2010–11 there were 7 264 offences. I can assure the member for Balcatta that there are great many more motor vehicles available on the road to thieves —

Mr J.C. Kobelke: Do you want to comment on the upward trend of the last two years?

Mr C.C. PORTER: Yes, sure. Do I want to? Well what —

Mr J.C. Kobelke: You comment on it. I don't understand why, but it is worrying.

Mr C.C. PORTER: There has been an increase from last year to this year. On this graph members will see the last four years of total reported offences, 2007–08, 2008–09, 2009–10 and then a slight increase in the 2010–11 financial year, and obviously we are yet to collect data for the 2011–12 financial year. But still the long-term trend line is going in the right direction, which is what we would expect and what we aim for. The year 2009–10 showed the lowest year of total reported offences in modern history on record in this jurisdiction. There were probably a couple of reasons for that. I would argue that some of those relate to parole and also the increase in the prison muster. That period also coincided with the largest prison population that Western Australia has ever had. I have a graph here that I think I have tabled before, so it is in the Parliament's system. The green line reflects the prison population, and as the prison population goes up, the number of offences reported in the community sharply decreases. I do not suggest that that means that there is a long-term 10 or 15-year strategy of constant increases in the prison population, but what it does show is that there is a hardcore group of offenders who commit multiple offences, and if they receive terms of imprisonment, they are not feeding into the offence cycle out in the community. We can see that one of the reasons the prison population peaked was that both through the Prisoners Review Board and the administrative policies of the government, a much firmer view was taken on parole. It became harder to be released on parole because of the particular views taken by the chair of the Prisoners Review Board, in addition to which there was incredibly heavy policing during the 18-month to two-year period people were on parole. If a person was on parole in WA and they had a parole condition not to consume alcohol, they could quite easily find themselves being breathalysed at 2.00 am at their place of residence, and if they tested positive to that breathalyser test and breached the term of their parole, they were taken back into custody. This government took the view that parole, and the very heavy policing of parole, became a very important tool to ensure people who have records of repeat offences in the categories that most affect members of the community—assaults, burglaries, aggravated burglaries, robberies, car thefts—could be very heavily scrutinised, and if a great and disproportionate deal of policing resources and manpower could be focused upon them, it could cause accelerated decreases in overall rates of reported crime in a relatively short period, which is what occurred.

DR A.D. BUTI (Armadale) [4.43 pm]: In this debate the Attorney General and the Minister for Police spoke in completely different tangents. The Attorney General talked about a trend that is going down and said that the last Labor government did a good job. The Minister for Police did not even talk about what is happening today, and we know why he did not talk about what is happening today, because it is out of control. All he talked about for his 10 whole minutes was the period of the former Labor government. People in Western Australia today are not concerned about what happened in 2005, they are concerned about what is happening now, and the trend. It is interesting that the Attorney General, in talking about statistics, picks out those that suit him. The trend for most crimes, particularly violent crimes, is that they are going the wrong way; they are heading north, not south. Domestic assault has gone up 11.5 per cent over the last five-year period. Figures for most categories of robbery have gone up. The trend for the last year shows that domestic assaults have risen from 656 to 728. Robberies of businesses have gone up; they have nearly doubled. Robberies of non-businesses have gone up. Home burglaries have gone up. Homicide has gone up. Therefore, it is wrong to say that the trend is going down; it is not going down. The official statistics from the police department for the past five years show us that the trend is upward.

What do we have? Let us take the example of this weekend's incident on the Armadale railway line. I would prefer that we refer to it as the south east line rather than the Armadale line, because most of the crime is not actually taking place in Armadale, it is taking place further up the line. But whatever; we had a violent crime; it was a terrible crime. What was the Minister for Transport's response? "We'll close the line down; we'll close the trains. That will take away the problem." What will be the solution to home invasions? Will we take away people's homes so they cannot be invaded? That is not a solution to the problem faced by the Western Australian community today. Whatever statistics the Attorney General wants to utilise in his arguments, the official Western Australian crime statistics over a five-year period, and also for the last year—whether it is July to July, August to August or September to September—show us that the trend is upward. Therefore, this government is failing in its obligation. When the coalition came to government it said that it would ensure that people felt safe. Well, they do not feel safe, and they will not feel safe through press conferences, the imposition of harsher penalties or by bringing in laws that may appear to be harsh. What will make them safer is what the member for Mindarie suggested: more police on the beat. The Attorney General started off his contribution to the debate

Speaker; Mr Eric Ripper; Mr John Quigley; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Christian Porter; Dr Tony Buti

talking about the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting at which there was a massive police presence on the streets; the crime rate did go down. Now the point is: where is that police presence today?

Question put and a division taken with the following result —

Ayes (21)

Dr A.D. Buti
Mr R.H. Cook
Ms J.M. Freeman
Mr J.N. Hyde
Mr W.J. Johnston
Mr J.C. Kobelke

Mr F.M. Logan
Mr M. McGowan
Mrs C.A. Martin
Mr M.P. Murray
Mr A.P. O’Gorman
Mr P. Papalia

Mr J.R. Quigley
Ms M.M. Quirk
Mr E.S. Ripper
Mrs M.H. Roberts
Mr C.J. Tallentire
Mr P.C. Tinley

Mr A.J. Waddell
Mr M.P. Whitely
Mr D.A. Templeman (*Teller*)

Noes (31)

Mr P. Abetz
Mr F.A. Alban
Mr C.J. Barnett
Mr I.C. Blayney
Mr J.J.M. Bowler
Mr I.M. Britza
Mr T.R. Buswell
Mr G.M. Castrilli

Mr V.A. Catania
Dr E. Constable
Mr M.J. Cowper
Mr J.H.D. Day
Mr J.M. Francis
Mr B.J. Grylls
Dr K.D. Hames
Mrs L.M. Harvey

Mr A.P. Jacob
Dr G.G. Jacobs
Mr R.F. Johnson
Mr A. Krsticevic
Mr J.E. McGrath
Mr W.R. Marmion
Mr P.T. Miles
Ms A.R. Mitchell

Dr M.D. Nahan
Mr C.C. Porter
Mr D.T. Redman
Mr M.W. Sutherland
Mr T.K. Waldron
Dr J.M. Woollard
Mr A.J. Simpson (*Teller*)

Question thus negatived.