

POLICE — RECRUITS

683. Dr A.D. BUTI to the Minister for Police:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's massive investment in police resources and protecting our community from crime. Can the minister update the house on this government's commitment to boosting police numbers and recruiting the officers we need to keep our community safe?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS replied:

I thank the member for Armadale for his question and for his support of our police. I am pleased his electorate of Armadale will be getting a comprehensive police and justice centre, which our government looks forward to opening hopefully next year. The fact is that our police have been doing an incredible job. They have been targeting methamphetamine and organised crime in the Western Australian community like never before. Yesterday I highlighted the fantastic drug bust on a property in Alkimos, including over 20 kilograms of methamphetamine and over \$1.2 million in cash, along with guns. People may have seen on the news last night that on Wednesday, 21 August, there was a massive seizure from Jandakot, including approximately 690 grams of MDMA powder, more cash, and an industrial pill press that can produce about 8 000 pills an hour. Those are the kinds of pills that are distributed at music parties and other venues where young people go. Taking that out of commission is a very rare thing. In fact, Assistant Commissioner of Police Brad Royce said yesterday that in his 25-year career in policing he had only ever seen one other pill press of this nature. This has really taken a dent out of those criminal enterprises.

The member for Armadale asked me how the government was going with recruitment. As he will be aware, unlike the former government, this government made a commitment to more police at the election. We have extended that commitment. At the election, the government promised 100 additional officers for the methamphetamine task force and 25 officers for the regional enforcement unit. It has delivered 13 extra officers for the 24-hour and extended police stations. That takes us to 138 officers. But, in addition to that, the government through its budget process has allocated another 10 officers to fight domestic violence in our community, so that is 148 additional officers.

Yesterday, I had the opportunity to visit the Western Australia Police Academy, which has more squads in training than previously. Previously, we needed only six colours to name our squads—red, blue, gold, green, grey and white. We are now operating two further squads—silver and brown. Two of those squads will graduate on 13 September. We have cadets in training and also a greater diversity of recruits among those. Over a third of those in training were born overseas. We also have two groups of Aboriginal police cadets in training, which has been a special priority of Commissioner Dawson. We also have some culturally and linguistically diverse trainees, which is a new initiative to diversify our police workforce. The first of the CALD trainees commenced at the police academy on 12 August as part of a police preparation program. The CALD trainees include people born in countries that have been categorised by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, but it excludes Australia, Canada, England, Ireland, New Zealand, Northern Scotland et cetera. The trainees come from Kenya, Pakistan, Malaysia, China, Brazil and Belgium. They speak a variety of different languages, including Punjabi, Hindi, Swahili, Urdu, Chinese, Mandarin, Brazilian and French.

Ms M.M. Quirk interjected.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Yes.

There is a real effort by Commissioner Dawson to diversify our police force. I note that despite the academy operating at just about capacity—we have more squads to start before the end of the year—we are focusing very much on having a much more diverse workforce.

I also note that the current attrition rate for the WA police for 2019–20 is about nine a month; so many more officers are coming in to train than are exiting.