

POLICE AMENDMENT BILL 2009

Third Reading

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

MR R.F. JOHNSON (Hillarys — Minister for Police) [2.55 pm]: When the debate was interrupted for question time, I had been giving my response to the comments made by members opposite on the third reading of this very important legislation that is before the house.

The SPEAKER: Order! Minister, take a seat for a moment. Members, if you wish to sit in this place and listen to this particular bill being discussed, I ask you to do so. If there are other things that you feel are more important and you want to talk about them, please take that outside.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I want to reiterate my comments and respond to some of the comments that were made by members opposite during the third reading stage of this bill. I am at a loss, honestly, because it appears to me that no matter how many times I explain to members opposite the detail of the bill and answer the questions that they put during consideration in detail, it just does not seem to get through to them. So I would like to put on the record again exactly what is happening in this bill.

First, the police auxiliary officers will be employed under virtually the same terms and conditions as was the case under the Labor government for Aboriginal police liaison officers, special constables and custodial officers. Members opposite have talked about how much the police auxiliary officers will be paid. It is a bit too soon to say exactly what the final figure will be. However, I gave an indication last night, or in the early hours of this morning, that the figures would be in comparison with what custodial officers are earning at the moment, which I think is between \$49 000 and \$53 000 a year as a base rate. The salary for auxiliary officers will be similar to that. I think that answers that question.

Members opposite keep saying that they want to have codified the exact duties and powers that the police auxiliary officers will be assuming. Of course, once again the auxiliary officers will be assuming the powers conferred on them by the Commissioner of Police, in the same way as occurs now with custodial officers, Aboriginal police liaison officers and special constables. That was all done under the previous government. It was good enough under the previous government, but it is not good enough now that we are in government for the police commissioner to use the same criteria and the same instrument to employ these police auxiliary officers. I cannot believe that the opposition, which says that it is serious about fighting crime, will be voting against this bill. Had we accepted the opposition's ridiculous amendment that these 150 police auxiliary officers be put on hold for five years, that would have meant that these jobs would have been on offer but they would not have been able to be filled for five years. This is absolute hypocrisy and crass politics from the Opposition. We promised 500, and we are going to deliver 500. We have already started with the 350 officers as identified and requested by the police commissioner, and we will be starting, as soon as this bill goes through Parliament, on the 150 police auxiliary officers. They will all be police officers. The opposition is telling members of the public, who have a serious concern about their safety, that it wants to keep 150 fully trained, fully qualified, fully sworn police officers doing desk jobs, running evidence about and guarding prisoners in the lockups. Opposition members want to keep those officers in those positions. They do not want them to be out on the streets doing the job of front-line policing. They do not want them to do that. For five years they want to leave those fully trained officers behind desks and doing those other odd jobs which those officers do not want to do and which the community does not want them to do. Therefore, I think the community will be very concerned at the intransigence of the Labor opposition in trying to keep those officers doing those jobs, rather than getting out onto the streets where they are needed.

Thank God for a Liberal-National government, because we have listened to the police commissioner. We have heard what he said and what he wants, and we are delivering that. We are going to have 150 police auxiliary officers doing the jobs that are designated for them to do, which has been outlined time and again. During their third reading contributions, opposition members said that we have not told them what these officers are going to do; there is nothing codified. Tell me: is anything codified for Aboriginal police liaison officers? Is anything codified for custodial officers? No, there is not. It is left to the police commissioner to work on an instrument of employment between him, as the employing person, and those individuals, who do a very valuable job. I think that those people who will take up the job of police auxiliary officer will be absolutely dismayed and disgusted at the sort of description that members of the opposition have labelled them with, because they will be decent, honest, hardworking people.

Mr M.P. Whitely: They won't be.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The member just cannot get it, can he? He does not like the idea. It is a new initiative and it is a good initiative that the Liberal-National government has brought forward. It is something that the public will be very happy with, because, as I said, it will allow those 150 existing —

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Sorry; who is the member calling a pig? Who is he calling a pig?

Mr P. Papalia: You can put perfume all over it and it's still not real.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The member will never learn, will he?

Mr P. Papalia: It still stinks.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: My friend needs to learn a lot; he really does. The trouble with him is that his mouth runs ahead of his brain all the time. The member for West Swan comes into this place and makes some very disgraceful comments sometimes. She makes insulting comments, certainly to me, but I can take it; I am not worried; I am not bothered. It goes right over my head, my friend.

What did we see when opposition members made their speeches in the third reading debate? We saw the same as we saw in consideration in detail and in the second reading debate. There was nothing but filibustering. Most of it was nothing to do with the bill in front of us—nothing whatsoever. They talked about all sorts of things. All the member for Perth was interested in was riding a bike to Perth. They talked about graffiti—nothing to do with the bill. We heard about police stations that may have been closed. All the member for Warnbro wanted to talk about was the fact that we have not —

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: What did the member say? What did the member accuse me of? He either has the guts to repeat it or has the decency to withdraw it. He is not going to do either. He should be ashamed of himself. He really does not know the ethos and the etiquette of this place; he really does not. If he is going to say something like that, he should have the guts to stand and repeat it, or he should withdraw it.

Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan: Follow your example and keep repeating everything!

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Why does the member not take her glass and go to Canberra, if she can? Go back doorknocking, my friend.

Withdrawal of Remark

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: It is interesting that we have had a number of rulings in the past. The comment by the Minister for Police to the member for Armadale is unacceptable, and I ask him to withdraw it.

Mr R.F. Johnson: What did I say?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: With regard to the glass. The minister knows what he said. He should withdraw. He is a disgrace. He is a disgraceful minister in this place, and he should stand there, admit the fact and withdraw!

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr J.M. Francis): Member for Mandurah, points of order do not require comments like that.

Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan: I have never been in this chamber doing star jumps, mate. I have never behaved like your leader here.

Mr R.F. Johnson: You've done a lot of other things, my friend. You've done nothing but insult me ever since I've been in here. That's all you ever do. I don't mind.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order! On the member for Mandurah's point of order, I have noticed in the past few days that there have been a number of comments that contain imputations about other members. I do not think they are appropriate. I am not going to rule this comment unparliamentary, but I think, in the spirit of the Parliament, it is not required. I will leave it at that.

Debate Resumed

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. What I have been saying is that during this debate we have heard nothing about the bill. We have heard the member for Warnbro talking about what was promised by his government when he went to the by-election to try to win his seat, which he did. He is absolutely aghast that the police commissioner did not want that police station. Quite frankly, we have other plans for the member's area. What a terrible thing: an incoming government has a different view from the previous government. That has happened many times, my friend. It happened when the Labor Party took over government in 2001—the member was not in that government, because he was still somewhere else. The previous Liberal-National government had purchased land and had earmarked and promised a police station in Dawesville. What did the Labor Party do? It came into government, flogged off the land and did not carry through with that promise.

Ms R. Saffioti: Build it now.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Build it now; build it now. Goodness me! We have heard nothing from the opposition about this bill. We have had nothing but filibustering. During consideration in detail —

Point of Order

Mr T.G. STEPHENS: The minister is constantly reflecting on the Chair. He is accusing the Chair of having allowed a debate that did not focus on the content of the bill, and that is to reflect upon the rulings of the Chair. The Chair would not possibly have tolerated a debate in this place that did not focus on the matter at hand. The minister should not reflect on the Chair in that manner.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr J.M. Francis): When I am in the chair, I give a fair bit of leeway, but I do not let things go too far. I do not think it is a point of order. In fact, I am ruling that there is no point of order. I ask the minister to continue.

Debate Resumed

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. In the 17 years I have been in this place, I have never reflected on the Chair. I certainly would never do that. I am responding to the comments that were made during the speeches of members opposite during the third reading debate and the comments that members opposite made during consideration in detail. That is the whole purpose of the third reading response, which members opposite seem to forget. I have a right to respond to the comments that they made, obviously, because that is known as my response, as the minister, to their comments.

Mr M.P. Whitely: Is it?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Yes, it is, just for those people who do not know. One would think that some people would have been around long enough to know. I think they do, actually, but they just want to interject again.

I am appalled at the lack of clarity that members opposite have seen in this bill. They do not seem to be able to read it properly. Last night and in the early hours of this morning when members opposite were making their comments during consideration in detail, the member for Midland, who had been missing all day, came into the chamber and all she did, to filibuster, was read out the whole of the clauses. She even smiled at me, because she knew that I knew what game she was up to. She knew exactly what it was. I accept that when there is a huge philosophical difference between that side of the house and this side of the house, the opposition will filibuster. Yes, we did it in opposition, of course, but it is normally on areas of great philosophical difference. It is not on something like the bill that is before the house at the moment, which will enable the employment of 150 individuals here in Western Australia. I find it atrocious that the opposition would vote against this bill. When the opposition calls for a division, which I am told it will do because it does not support this bill, I will let the public know exactly what position the opposition has put our police officers in. I will let the public know that the opposition tried to keep 150 police officers back behind desks, and doing courier jobs and watch-house and lockup guard duties, rather than front-line policing. I think the public will believe us; they certainly will not believe the opposition.

In conclusion, the opposition is running scared because it has seen that the government is tough on crime with the legislation that it has introduced in its first year in government.

Ms M.M. Quirk interjected.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The member had no convictions. The previous Attorney General introduced a weapons bill, but the previous government did not have the gumption to get it through Parliament before going to the polls six months early. The then government thought it would catch the opposition off guard, and that it would catch members of the community off guard as well. It did not work; it backfired. The people of Western Australia, by a majority of votes, voted for people on this side of the house rather than on the other side. As long as the opposition behaves in the way it is doing, it will continue to do that. We should be in government for the next 12 or 16 years.

Question put and a division taken with the following result —

Extract from *Hansard*
[ASSEMBLY - Wednesday, 14 October 2009]
p8050c-8053a

Mr Rob Johnson; Mr David Templeman; Acting Speaker; Mr Tom Stephens

Ayes (27)

Mr P. Abetz
Mr F.A. Alban
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
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

Dr G.G. Jacobs
Mr R.F. Johnson
Mr A. Krsticevic
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 A.J. Simpson
Mr M.W. Sutherland
Mr T.K. Waldron
Mr J.E. McGrath (*Teller*)

Noes (24)

Ms L.L. Baker
Ms A.S. Carles
Mr R.H. Cook
Ms J.M. Freeman
Mr J.N. Hyde
Mr W.J. Johnston

Mr J.C. Kobelke
Mr F.M. Logan
Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan
Mr M. McGowan
Mr M.P. Murray
Mr A.P. O’Gorman

Mr P. Papalia
Ms M.M. Quirk
Mr E.S. Ripper
Mrs M.H. Roberts
Ms R. Saffioti
Mr T.G. Stephens

Mr C.J. Tallentire
Mr A.J. Waddell
Mr P.B. Watson
Mr M.P. Whitely
Mr B.S. Wyatt
Mr D.A. Templeman (*Teller*)

Pairs

Mr A.P. Jacob
Dr E. Constable

Mrs C.A. Martin
Mr J.R. Quigley

Question thus passed.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.