

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 22 February 2023]

p624b-647a

Mr Shane Love; Dr David Honey; Acting Speaker; Ms Libby Mettam; Hon Mia Davies; Mr Peter Rundle; Ms Sabine Winton; Mr Terry Healy; Mr David Scaife; Ms Jodie Hanns; Mr Paul Papalia

CRIME

Motion

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Leader of the Opposition) [4.00 pm]: I move —

That the house condemns the McGowan Labor government for its gross neglect of crucial services that has allowed crime to run rampant and exposed communities to unprecedented levels of criminality.

As we know, crime is well and truly out of control right across regional Western Australia. This was the subject of a matter of public interest yesterday that was roundly argued by us. Of course, the government did very little to convince the Western Australian community that it was taking the issue of crime seriously. We know that the crime situation is spiralling out of control. We know that communities do not feel safe. We know that police are leaving in droves, so much so that the Minister for Police has now resorted to poaching police from the United Kingdom and Ireland to make up for the fact that he cannot recruit enough officers here to keep the force at full strength. It is a complete admission on his part of a failure to attract Western Australians into the police force. He denies a problem with morale and resignation levels, yet the facts speak for themselves. Our population cannot actually replace our police force.

We know that violent crime has increased by 17 per cent since the Labor government came to office. Family violence is 34 per cent above the five-year average. We know that Banksia Hill Detention Centre and the associated mismanagement of the youth justice system is causing an immense number of problems in not only that centre, but also the community. It has been reported that children in the Kimberley are not concerned about being sent to Banksia Hill. They do not see it as a deterrent. The Premier seeks to blame others for all the woes that are occurring in regional Western Australia, whether that be local communities, local members or parents. I think that everybody in this house would accept that, generally, the parents of a child are responsible for their behaviour and for ensuring that their children are nurtured, guided and kept safe. But it is a well-established fact and well-established knowledge that within Aboriginal Australia, this is not always the case because of a well-known condition called intergenerational trauma that exists in many Aboriginal communities. It leads to an over-representation of Aboriginal people on welfare and in the justice system. I will quote from an article in the *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy* that was written by David McCallum from Victoria University. He wrote about what that condition means for Aboriginal people who are affected by it and states —

In the cases experienced by Indigenous peoples, intergenerational trauma is produced and reproduced in the present, as what we might describe as ‘war by other means’, from the origins of colonising and its effects on later generations through the reproduction of similar traumatic events, many of which are experienced in the contexts of family, health, and everyday living. The effects include those detailed in the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare reports down the years—Indigenous incarceration and deaths in custody, child removal, poverty, alcohol abuse, family violence, etc.

At the moment, what we see happening in many regional communities in Western Australia is very much as described by those lines.

We know that it will not be possible to have parents assume responsibility for their children when they are suffering from intergenerational trauma themselves. Very often, the parents are very young and might even be teenagers. We know that a targeted program is required to assist them to break that cycle.

I have asked questions of the Minister for Community Services around the Target 120 program. I have no issue with the need to have programs like Target 120, but I am deeply concerned that nine months after that program was rolled out in towns such as Carnarvon, it has not commenced and there has been no intake of children. We had an announcement that some people were, apparently, being sought, and positions were available, but are those positions being filled? What will happen if we cannot get people into those communities? How will we break the level of distress and cycle of violent crime that we see happening in some communities? How will that be addressed? When we talk to people in communities outside the major regional centres especially, it is clear that they have seen a loss of capacity and leadership in many local government services. They are outsourced from the metropolitan area or from a larger regional centre. Towns like Carnarvon have had key people taken out of the town with the services being provided from Geraldton. This situation is making it very difficult to implement meaningful change and meaningful programs like Target 120 that would represent a major step forward. I have no issue with the need for the program. I am concerned about its rollout and what other solutions might be looked at in the meantime to help to break that cycle of violence, abuse and alcohol and illicit substance use that we see happening in many communities.

There is nothing more stark a reminder of just how bad things have become in some communities across our state than the recent reports of a fencing situation in Halls Creek whereby people are actually putting razor wire around their buildings. I refer to an article titled, “Kimberley Hotel ordered by the Shire of Halls Creek to take down razor wire around pub”. In Perth, when we have a discussion about fencing, it might about whether the fencing has to

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be closed or open or made of pickets, super six, Colorbond or what have you. But in Halls Creek the choice now is whether a person puts up razor wire or an electric fence. That is not a normal situation. These people are not putting razor wire around their properties because they like to have ugly and very dangerous fencing. They are now having to remove the razor wire because it is not allowed under the council by-laws and install an electric fence instead. We now see the need for an electric fence around the Kimberley Hotel rather than razor wire. The fence will cover around 70 per cent of the hotel's boundary. I assume that some areas, perhaps at the front of the hotel where the cars come in, might have a different fence, but the rest of the hotel will be surrounded by an electric fence. I do not know how many volts that electric fence will put out. I assume that is going to have a very bad kick for anybody who comes in contact with it. I do not think that is the issue, but it is a symptom of a problem in a town when someone has to decide whether to have razor wire or an electric fence around their property.

Members in this place have been calling out the government for a very long time on its lack of interest in addressing these regional issues and the rising crime levels. In fact, in this place on 9 September 2021, the former member for North West Central raised a grievance on the issue. A motion was moved in February 2022 that this house condemn the McGowan government for taking only limited action on youth crime gripping our state and for failing to deliver the service WA expects after arrogantly dismissing concerns raised in this place. One year on and here we are in pretty well the same situation. We know that nothing has been done to make real meaningful change because we are here today debating the same issue. We are here today at a time when communities across Western Australia are calling out for assistance and calling out for help.

One of the major changes that has happened in the last year has been the federal election. We know that the Albanese government went in with an undertaking that it would remove the cashless debit card should it be elected. I am looking here at a report from *The Age* of 21 February 2023 —

The Western Australian mayors —

They mistakenly call them mayors, but they are shire presidents from the goldfields region. The article continues —

... goldfields region have called for the return of the controversial cashless debit card in a bid to stop alcohol-fuelled violence harming their communities.

Yesterday the Minister for Police said that the cashless debit card had not been effective in Laverton because people from outside of town could still come into town and use cash. If that is the case, why are the shire presidents of both Leonora and Laverton writing to the Prime Minister to call for millions of dollars in support programs aimed at reducing crime? They are saying —

... the surge in violence was directly attributed to the abolition of the card, saying his communities understood there wouldn't be an overnight fix.

“We're not going to just sit here, we'll start yelling and screaming, jumping up and down because we need an injection of funding now to get programs up and running,” he said.

Mr P. Papalia: Member, you're misquoting.

Mr R.S. LOVE: It is all there. I will put it in *Hansard* later. It continues —

“The community was a safer place —

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

Point of Order

Dr D.J. HONEY: Surely the minister can be patient enough until his response. He is going to get an hour.

Mr T. Healy interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms R.S. Stephens): Member for Southern River, I will listen to this in silence.

Dr D.J. HONEY: The minister will have an hour to respond later, and I can barely hear the Leader of the Opposition for his constant interjections.

The ACTING SPEAKER: There is no point of order. If members can cease interjecting, we will listen to this last 59 minutes in silence.

Debate Resumed

Mr R.S. LOVE: As I was saying, they are calling for an injection of funds. They are saying directly —

“The community was a safer place because of the cashless debit card.”

Today I asked the Premier whether he would consider injecting funds into the program and whether he had spoken to Anthony Albanese about funding Western Australia in the same way that that \$250 million of funding has been sent to the Northern Territory. What we heard was a nil response. It was not a negative response. It was a nothing

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response. I do not think I learnt anything about his plans for Western Australia. I do not think we heard anything about what future investments there may be in Western Australia. We know that the mayors, as they call them in this article, including the president of the Laverton shire council, had voiced their concerns about this.

But it is not only the local governments. I will read from a report by Jarrod Lucas of 8 February 2023 titled, “Alcohol restricted in Laverton as Aboriginal elder says pub has become ‘sacred site’”. This Aboriginal elder in Laverton has become so despairing that she thinks her community has replaced their old values, their old customs and their old beliefs with a love of alcohol and are making that their sacred thing. Mrs Scott says —

“The way our mob are going, alcohol has become their sacred thing—alcohol, drugs,” Ms Scott said.

“The Laverton Desert Inn has become their sacred site now.”

Ms Scott’s granddaughter ... said she had a great childhood growing up in Laverton, but her children were experiencing something far different.

“It’s pretty bad ... our kids can’t even go down town without being humbugged or abused by drunks,” she said, looking over at the mess in Skull Creek.

“How would they feel if we went to their community, sat around getting drunk all day and trashed their town?”

These are Aboriginal people from Laverton who are in despair and they are pointing out that their situation is dire. When she says “humbug”, I am sure many people know what that is, but I will explain. Humbugging is basically the practice of going to a person and demanding that they give their cash to that person. One of the benefits of the cashless debit card was that families could not be humbugged. They could not lose their money to demanding relatives, who were often male, and used threats of violence to take money from the family and spend it on alcohol. That is what the cashless debit card was helping to address, and in doing so, it was ensuring that food was being put on the table for the children instead of alcohol on the table for someone who was perhaps not even a resident of that household. That practice is common in Aboriginal communities. That is an Aboriginal elder talking about it there. That is not me. They are her words explaining what has happened.

The minister can deny that the cashless debit card helped in Laverton, but the shire president certainly does not hold his views. The article states that he —

... blames the recent unrest on the end of the federal government’s cashless debit card, which saw a mass exodus from the town in October last year.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I am not responding to the Minister for Police. He can talk later, if he likes. The article continues —

Ms Scott has been painting the story of Laverton and the alcohol struggles of its Indigenous people in a traditional Aboriginal artwork.

I certainly feel that if I ever get the opportunity to go to Laverton, I will visit Mrs Scott and look at that artwork and talk to her directly about her experiences because I think, having read her words, that she is a very powerful representative for her region and I think one of those voices—we are talking about voices that must be heard—that government should be listening to instead of dismissing. We can see from the interjections coming from that side that they are not going to be doing very much listening in any form on this matter. We have explained that it is not as simple in the communities as the Premier may think. Parents cannot just take responsibility for their children when the parents themselves have been in some way affected by the trauma of colonisation and the aftereffects of decades of alcohol and other drug use and abuse.

We know that the children who fall into the justice system will inevitably move through other stages of their life affected by that interaction, especially if they go to Banksia Hill. A very high rate of children who go there end up in prison at a later stage of their life. It is something that we should be trying to avoid, if possible. We should be looking at solutions to make sure that those children do not get to that stage and do not have the experience that going to Banksia Hill will bring.

Today in question time, some shocking statistics were revealed of the children who have been moved at 18 years of age to Casuarina Prison. There have been seven attempted suicides in that cohort—seven. That in itself should be a wake-up call to everybody that this is not a situation of dealing with naughty children; we are dealing with people who have been seriously damaged and need an enormous amount of assistance if they are going to get out of that cycle. We need to get back into the communities to make sure that we break that cycle so that other children will not present to the justice system in future. We need to make sure that children are looking to go to school rather than onto the streets, and that they have homes that they can live in safely with food on the table and employment prospects and opportunities going forward. All those things need to be provided for those children who have nothing at the moment.

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The Premier and the Minister for Corrective Services have done some polling here, and I think they think that they are on pretty good ground. They have gone out and said, “Do you think that those kids in Banksia Hill should behave? Do you think that they are the problem, and not the system?” The government is playing to the crowd now. It is dog whistling, instead of accepting the responsibility that it is the government of all Western Australian people, including those children.

I think I saw a statistic that over 20 per cent of children who go into Banksia Hill are, in fact, wards of the state. They are the direct responsibility of the state. They do not have parents who have any influence on their lives at this stage; they are actually wards of the state. The Minister for Community Services through her department is perhaps ultimately responsible for their welfare. What sort of direction are they being given if they are in the care of the state and they end up in Banksia Hill? Is that not a failure in itself? Does that not set off an alarm bell somewhere within the minister’s own department?

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Sorry, I just got disturbed by the noise over the back there.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister!

Mr R.S. LOVE: We know that police are leaving the system in droves. We know that they do not believe that the resources directed to the Operation Regional Shield response is a sustainable situation. The police discussed Operation Regional Shield at their conference. I also raised in Parliament that there were concerns from officers about that. The minister said that there were no such concerns.

Mr P. Papalia: Where was that?

Mr R.S. LOVE: In this report of 1 December 2022, we see that, at its conference, the Western Australian Police Union—I know the minister will say something about the changes in the composition of the union, but this is the conference, so this is the rank and file members of the union—actually discussed the sustainability of Operation Regional Shield. The police could not sustain that number of officers being sent into these communities in an emergency response forever. It was an emergency response, not a forever response. Something needs to be done to ensure that we have the services locally to tackle juvenile crime. We know that it is not all about the police; that is the point we are making. It is not all about the police; it is about a whole lot of conditions that exist in the community and in the region, a lack of resources to address many of those conditions, and a lack of effort, coordination and understanding from people like the Minister for Police that there is actually a problem.

The Minister for Police is presiding over a situation of dire circumstance and he refuses to take responsibility. When people highlight the issues, he says that they are denigrating the community, they are denigrating the regions, and they are running down communities. They are doing nothing of the sort. They are actually bringing to his attention the issues that people are suffering and the conditions that communities are experiencing. That was the police union itself calling out the sustainability of the current response of the government in Operation Regional Shield. When we have a situation in which a police officer is facing the risk of assault or of being hunted down by a LandCruiser, as is happening in many of those communities, it is no wonder that morale is so low and that they do not wish to sustain that type of operation going forward. We need to get to the root cause of the situation and address crime before it becomes such an issue.

The McGowan government announced a Kimberley juvenile justice strategy as an election commitment in 2017, and yet we are still seeing nothing actually delivered on the ground six years later. What do we have? We have communities in uproar, communities calling out for help, and a government that does not seem to be listening to the communities. The police minister is not listening to his own police. If he is not aware of why so many police are resigning, maybe he should make himself aware. I am sure it is not so that they can all go and become construction workers; I am sure it is actually to do with the poor morale, the concern that officers hold for their positions and the pressure that they are being put under by a system that is not listening to them or the people from the communities in which they are trying to address the crime situations.

I go back to Banksia Hill. The minister has so often refused to take responsibility for the situation at Banksia Hill. He really needs to step up to the plate. When members of local government are re-elected every four years, they have to go off and do fresh training in their responsibilities and roles. I wonder whether the minister has ever done any training in his roles under the Westminster system of ministerial responsibility. It does not seem to me that he thinks he is responsible for anything at all. He does not seem to believe that anything that happens on his watch is an issue, yet his own Inspector of Custodial Services had this to say about Banksia Hill in a report of 14 November 2022. I quote from an article published by *The West Australian*. He said —

Our most recent report on Banksia Hill was an unscheduled inspection commencing in November 2021. We found a centre in deep crisis where critical incidents of self harm, attempted suicides, staff assaults, and roof ascents were on the rise. If I'm honest, it was keeping me awake at night and I could not hold out until our next inspection scheduled for 2023.

During that inspection a young person told us how his time locked in a cell made him think of self harm. He told us how he and his friends had created a "suicide pact", and that he watched one boy stop breathing after trying to take his life. Banksia Hill remains fortunate it has not had a death in custody. This is my greatest fear.

Twelve months later and only limited progress has been made. The transfer of some young people to Unit 18 at Casuarina Prison was not the solution to Banksia Hill's problems of a "one-stop-shop" that I or my predecessors ever advocated for, granting that years of inaction required some sort of circuit breaker. While Banksia Hill and Unit 18 have both stabilised somewhat recently, the situation remains fragile and staffing shortages continue to impact time out of cell.

We know that the situation has become so dire that the courts are now unwilling to send people into Banksia Hill. There was a recent case in which a young person who was on the cusp of becoming an adult was sent to an adult prison on the basis that it would be a safer environment than Banksia Hill. That is absolutely a sign of a complete failure from that minister to live up to his responsibility to provide a safe place. Again, he put out his hierarchy of concern. His hierarchy is community, then staff, then children. I do not know how he puts the life of a child at the bottom of his concerns. There have been seven attempts at suicide in unit 18, and the minister quite openly says that he puts concerns for the welfare of the child at the bottom of his level of concerns. I find that absolutely disgraceful and shocking. I think a minister who thinks like that should be stripped of his portfolio immediately. I think a minister who thinks like that probably has no place in government. I think that the Premier needs to take a serious look at the minister's role here and his workload in so many portfolios. He seems to be floundering. People's lives are at stake under that portfolio, and I think it is the portfolio that the Premier needs to act on first, by removing the minister from it immediately and replacing him with someone with more sensitivity who wants to take seriously his or her responsibility for the lives and the future of those children. The government needs to stop playing the blame game—blaming the kids, the parents, the local member or anyone except the government itself—for its own failures in delivering a safe community for all Western Australians.

MS L. METTAM (Vasse — Leader of the Liberal Party) [4.30 pm]: I rise to support the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition and underline the concerns opposition members have about the McGowan government's neglect of crucial services, which has resulted in very disturbing trends right across the state. We have seen, in many different communities across the state, extraordinary levels of violence, out-of-control crime, alcohol-fuelled violence and kids going hungry. There has been a 17 per cent increase in violent crime above the five-year average in Western Australia, and family-related violence is up by 34 per cent on the five-year average. Our services are being challenged and support for those services is also significantly wanting. I have spoken to people at many refuges and to people who are providing support for those services, and the government is effectively cutting services in the face of extraordinary demand.

As I have stated in this place before, the government can certainly use spin when it comes to talking about the rates of crime in this state. Drug-related crime and burglaries were down due to the COVID pandemic and the closing of the borders during that time, but we are seeing the severity of crime being reflected in the statistics, and it is soaring. I refer to the WA Police Union's crime severity score, which reflects the relative harm of offences rather than counting the raw number of felonies. It indicates some disturbing trends. Crime rates have increased by 15 per cent in the Perth city centre and by 22.2 per cent in regional WA. Four of the Western Australia Police Force's seven regional districts experienced significant CSS increases in severe crimes, the big ones being the Pilbara at 31.2 per cent; goldfields-Esperance, 35.5 per cent; midwest-Gascoyne, 45.1 per cent; and the Kimberley, 96 per cent. Over the past decade we have seen a rise in seven offence categories, including a 68 per cent increase in abduction and harassment, a 61 per cent increase in sexual offences and a more than 50 per cent increase in acts intended to cause injury. Quite clearly, there are disturbing levels of out-of-control violent crime on this government's watch.

Every day our news bulletins seem to be filled with ongoing and disturbing reports. Just today we heard from some small business operators in an article in *WAtoday*. Barrack Street Bottlemart owner Bhushan Raval told *9 News Perth* and *WAtoday* about the repeated shoplifting he is experiencing. He is quoted in the article —

"This is the worst I've seen in my life to be honest ... it seems like they're not afraid of the laws."

...

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Raval said the store could not afford to pay \$55 an hour for a security guard and was pleading with WA Police to provide small business owners with more support.

He is quoted as saying —

“If we try defend our products, they’ll throw chairs, they’ll hit us,” ...

“I have to fight back for my products because I’ve got family to look after.

I state again that he said —

“This is the worst I’ve seen in my life to be honest ... it seems like they’re not afraid of the laws.”

He expressed significant frustration at the lawlessness he is experiencing on an ongoing basis.

Looking at other areas, as I said, there was a 96 per cent increase in the severity of crime in the Kimberley over the decade. In February this year we saw reports that vehicle thefts in Halls Creek were at a nine-year high, with 76 reports last year. There has also been an increase in the number of assaults on police in the Kimberley—an increase of 51 per cent since 2019–20.

It is clear from this that crime is out of control under this government. Members in this place have raised their concerns about Carnarvon and the issues there. It is good that the Premier finally visited Carnarvon, but that comes off the back of some very troubling reports and ongoing concerns raised by opposition members, particularly the member for North West Central. There has been a significant increase in all types of crime in Carnarvon: in 2017, there were 12 family assaults; in 2022, there were 51. Total crime figures have gone from 2 872 in 2017 to 4 080 in 2022. It is certainly out of control, and it is disappointing that it took so much for the Premier to visit Carnarvon, given the real concerns.

On Australia Day there were riots and brawls in Yagan Square, on the Rockingham foreshore, in Murray Street Mall and in Northbridge, at a time when families were coming together to celebrate. It was marred by violence and antisocial behaviour. Just today we saw more reports of children involved in car theft in South Hedland and five kids allegedly involved in the theft of a car in the Pilbara. In Albany, there is a police hunt on following an assault.

It is clear that our police are under extraordinary pressure. It is also clear that officers of the Western Australia Police Force do not feel that this government has their back; they feel there is a lack of support, and they are voting with their feet. We know that WA police officers are leaving the force more than ever before. Last year, 473 police officers left the job that they have loved. That is over three times the average number of police a year who leave that profession. Although we welcome the recruitment campaign for the WA Police Force, it is essential that more is done to retain our police officers. The 473 officers who left the police force over that 12-month period is the highest number by a significant margin in its 189-year history. I have referred to new figures that indicate that from the beginning of this year until 14 February, 61 police officers have resigned. That highlights the significant number of police officers who are voting with their feet because they do not believe that this government has their back.

I have referred to some of the challenges that our police are dealing with. I have talked about the severity of crime. I have also touched on family-related violence. It is worth pointing out that the incidence of family-related violence has risen by over 30 per cent since this government has come to office. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Western Australia has the highest rate of reported family and domestic violence assault offences against females recorded across all the states. In Western Australia in 2021, over 1 250 assaults were reported to police per 100 000 people, and more than 1 150 adult women were hospitalised with injuries related to family and domestic violence. First Nations women accounted for 68 per cent of all hospitalisations. That is the highest figure since 2005, when the figure was 72 per cent. The latest data is certainly very concerning. It is reported that 51 per cent of the 15 000 women who sought assistance from specialist homelessness services in Western Australia did so as a result of family and domestic violence. I have spoken in this place before about the cuts that many women’s refuges are having to make to the raft of services that they provide and about the number of women and children whom they have to turn away simply because they cannot keep up with the demand. That is a very real concern. According to the *Women’s report card*, 45 per cent of women and 40 per cent of men are concerned about being the victim of physical assault in a public place. That is no wonder, given what the public witnessed on Australia Day with the brawls and riots at Yagan Square and on the Rockingham foreshore.

Mental health is clearly a contributing factor to the number of resignations from the police force. In 2019, 777 police personnel sought mental health support. In 2021, this climbed to over 2 600, a 300 per cent increase. A recent survey of members of the WA Police Union showed that 64 per cent of police officers view the morale in the Western Australia Police Force as very poor and 80 per cent believe that not enough is being done to support officers. There is a range of concerns. That fits into why our officers are leaving the force and the challenges they are facing, and the issues that are happening on the ground.

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The Leader of the Opposition touched on the Prime Minister's visit to Western Australia. We have also raised in this place our concerns about the impact of the removal of the cashless debit card in Laverton without any alternative solutions being provided. I have spoken to both Pat Hill, the president of the Shire of Laverton, and Janice Scott, an elder from that community. They want to be heard. They have raised very real issues about the alcohol-fuelled violence in the town. They are very much concerned about what this will mean for the women and children in the town of Laverton. It is disappointing that although the Prime Minister made the time to visit Kalgoorlie, he did not feel it was important enough to visit Laverton.

Mr P. Papalia: When were you last in Laverton?

Ms L. METTAM: We are talking about —

Several members interjected.

Ms L. METTAM: Given that the Prime Minister was visiting Kalgoorlie, and that the community of Laverton was crying out for the Prime Minister to visit that town and had invited him to do so, and given the mess that has been created as a result of the removal of the cashless debit card, we would have thought that the Prime Minister would have visited.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

Ms L. METTAM: We would have thought that the Premier would have urged the Prime Minister to give the community of Laverton his attention. Clearly, this community deserves the attention of the Prime Minister, given the damage that has been caused by that policy decision.

Mr T.J. Healy interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order! Member for Southern River, you are not actually sitting in your seat either, so please do not interject.

Ms L. METTAM: As Janice Scott has stated, the violence is out of control.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

Point of Order

Dr D.J. HONEY: Acting Speaker, the interjections from the minister are simply repetitive.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms R.S. Stephens): Thank you, member. There is no point of order.

Debate Resumed

Ms L. METTAM: It is childish.

Several members interjected.

Ms L. METTAM: This is a government of poor service delivery. As has been revealed through question time today and questions asked in the other place, the lack of delivery that we have seen on the ground for programs such as Target 120 is extraordinary. Nine months on, there has been virtually no intake of children to that program. We only need to look at a range of government services that the state is in control of delivering, whether it is in the mental health space or health, to see that. I speak about that quite often, given my shadow portfolio responsibilities. When it comes to law and order, we see the exodus of police leaving the force, and the hike in violent crime. When it comes to the mess that has been created through the machinery-of-government changes in the Communities portfolio, we see that this government is good at making announcements but poor when it comes to delivery.

[Member's time extended.]

Ms L. METTAM: We see that also with police officers, who are crying out for support across the board. We see that with the number of vacancies across the state, in particular in the regions, where that is even more poignant. We see that also in the 300 per cent increase in demand for mental health support that I have pointed to. We have seen that in relation to some of the calls that our officers have made about the support that they require. Police have asked for more support to stop high-speed car chases. Twenty-six officers who have been involved in high-speed chases are now being investigated. The WA Police Union has written to the acting commissioner and called for support such as the dash cameras that have been provided as a resource in other states and for training, which we believe would be a reasonable approach. There have also been calls for a specific law against ramming officers. We know that on 10 February, two officers were hospitalised after being rammed by a stolen vehicle in Kununurra. We also know that in 2021, the National Motor Vehicle Theft Reduction Council released a report on this issue recommending that states follow the lead of Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory by including a specific offence of ramming. What has this government done? It has just sat on its hands on that issue. This is despite the fact that we know that at least 15 police vehicles were hit by another car last year and 11 officers were injured as

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a result of their vehicles being struck. It is quite a clear report with recommendations. I would think that the impact on our officers would be enough to initiate some action by the government to support those recommendations, as supported by the union representing those officers.

Quite clearly, we have massive challenges in community safety right across this state. There has been a number of failures under this government's watch, including the failure to support our officers by ensuring that they have the mental health and wellbeing support that they require. A switch-off campaign has been led by the police union. It wants this government to support officers switching off their phones when they have finished work for the day and not responding to ongoing work matters that could wait another day. I can only imagine the pressure that that would put police under. Clearly, this is not a priority of this government. It adds to the list of concerns of our WA police officers about the lack of support that they feel they are getting from the McGowan government.

I have only touched on the community space, but I underline my disappointment in the Target 120 program, which was announced with much fanfare but, nine months on, little has been delivered in outcomes. It is quite sad to hear, given the importance of what such a program set out to achieve.

Many initiatives were delivered by the former government for vulnerable youth. It is important to point out that we opened 21 child and parent centres to assist the most marginalised in our community. We delivered 37 Aboriginal kindergartens. The former government had the first education minister to specifically direct funds to low socio-economic groups. We introduced Aboriginal cultural standards in schools and we also introduced Aboriginal elders into schools.

What we have seen on this government's watch is a government that is big on spin but poor on delivery. It is extraordinary that the Premier is ignoring the issues in towns such as Laverton and right across our community. It is disappointing that the Minister for Police is not giving our officers the support they deserve, which is clearly illustrated in the exodus of police from the force. It is disappointing that in the community services portfolio, women and children are being turned away from refuges because they are at capacity.

Ms S.F. McGurk: And that was never the case under you! You did nothing on domestic violence—absolutely nothing.

Ms L. METTAM: And you got dumped because of it!

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members!

Ms L. METTAM: There is so much to talk about on Target 120, but there has been so little on delivery. It is a shameful performance on what should be a priority. The role of government is to support those who are most vulnerable. While this government talks very big about what it will deliver, we have a community that is left wanting with those deliverables on the ground.

I will leave my comments there, but, quite clearly, we have seen a failure in police and community services, and a failure by the Premier to stand up for our most vulnerable in Western Australia.

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt) [4.57 pm]: I rise to support the motion that the house condemns the McGowan Labor government for its gross neglect of crucial services that has allowed crime to run rampant and exposed communities to unprecedented levels of criminality and to support the contributions of the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Liberal Party. Under this government, over the last six years we have seen crime spiral to unacceptable levels, particularly from a regional perspective. A number of communities have been well canvassed in this place, and we have seen an interest from the government only in recent days—finally. I wonder why that is.

The Premier and the Minister for Police said again and again last year that there was no crime issue in Carnarvon: “There’s nothing to see here.” They have finally decided that there is something that needs to be addressed. I wonder whether it is because the Prime Minister is heading to the north of Western Australia and they know that they will get asked difficult questions about communities in the north west and will have to have a response for communities that have clearly been neglected under this government, partly because of political retribution. There is absolutely no doubt that the community of North West Central supported and returned then member for North West Central Vince Catania. There is no doubt that this Labor government punished that community for that and ignored the community when he raised the issues in those communities on a number of occasions. That continued when the new member for North West Central came to this place and started asking questions. In the last week, all of a sudden, we saw a flurry of activity and the government recognised that there is a crime problem, there are dysfunctional families, and Carnarvon and other communities in the north west are facing a challenge that cannot continue to be swept under the rug.

I want to talk to the issue I raised in question time today in my question to the Minister for Corrective Services. The argument about Banksia Hill Detention Centre is intrinsic to how we make sure that we appropriately deal with those who create problems in communities. No-one on this side of politics believes that people who commit a crime should go unpunished.

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Mr P. Papalia interjected.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: No-one on this side of politics believes a person should not be punished if they commit a crime. If that person is a juvenile, how they are “punished” is different. It should be with a restorative and rehabilitative focus. It is absolutely clear from not just my perspective, but also that of many experts. The government would have listened to those experts had it not found itself in this dire situation and unwilling to admit that the punitive system at Banksia Hill is failing. It has come about under this government’s watch that we are creating better little criminals.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: The minister will have an opportunity.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Minister! You will have a chance to stand up and make a contribution. Stop being so puerile and childish and allow us to put our case! You are a disgrace. I am not taking interjections from that minister; he adds nothing of value.

Mr D.T. Punch interjected.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I am not taking them from you either. A huge contribution you have made in your portfolio!

The Banksia Hill issue has been well canvassed —

Several members interjected.

Point of Order

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I think the member for Central Wheatbelt has made it clear that she does not want any interjections, thanks.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms C.M. Collins): Members, the member will not be taking interjections.

Debate Resumed

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I do not imagine that the position taken by the Premier, the Minister for Police and other frontbench ministers in response to the treatment of juveniles at Banksia Hill and in this state over the last six years, particularly the last two years, would sit well with the vast number of backbenchers. But they are good backbenchers and they will sit and keep their mouths shut because they know what is good for them. They cannot complain in the Labor caucus or the Labor backroom. I do not understand how it has come to pass that a Labor Premier has essentially started dog whistling to the public by saying, “If you are a naughty little child, you deserve to be punished and go to Banksia Hill.” That is what he is doing. It is politically palatable but it is morally wrong, and government members know that.

The issue is far more nuanced and complex than what the Premier and others have put forward. The list of experts on this is lengthy, including Fiona Stanley, whom the Premier attacked for her position on how this issue should be dealt with; Denis Reynolds, a former President of the Children’s Court; a former Inspector of Custodial Services; the Telethon Kids Institute; and the Aboriginal Legal Service. These are people and organisations that the government would ordinarily listen to and respect, but their opinions have been dismissed because the government thinks it is politically palatable to say, “These kids have been naughty. The community is not safe. We’ll lock them up and throw away the key. We’ll do the right thing.” That is what the government has done. It put kids into an adult prison, despite the fact that every single person on the government side of the chamber was absolutely and utterly opposed to it when it happened under the previous government. Government members are happy to point that out every time they stand up, but they have not done anything different. The government sent kids to an adult jail. Not one of the organisations I just mentioned would endorse that decision because the government is breaking those kids even more, and it is completely unacceptable.

I will read, as I have done previously, some quotes from those people and organisations. On 13 July 2022, the Youth Affairs Council of WA stated —

Children should not be sent to maximum security prison under any circumstance.

When the only option in our system to support young people with complex needs is to place them in maximum security prison, then it is the system that is broken.

In response to the treatment of detainees at Banksia Hill, Judge Hylton Quail put forward the view —

“When you want to make a monster, this is how you do it.”

President of the Law Society of Western Australia Rebecca Lee said —

“Sending children to the main maximum-security prison in WA is not the right solution and there needs to be a rethink. The WA Government needs to urgently look at how it can redirect funding to the programmes

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that work to reduce the root causes of crime before behaviour escalates, and how to house children appropriately when either bail is inappropriate, or a custodial sentence is to be imposed. The system is broken if juvenile detainees are being housed in conditions described as cruel and punishing, and as having no rehabilitative effect.

Don Dale royal commissioner Mick Gooda said —

Our answer can't be to just keep locking kids up. We've got a recipe for making kids worse.

Louise Giolitto from the Western Australian Council of Social Service said —

There is a clear choice before them: —

She is referring to the government —

listen to the voices of many, or dig in and try to ride out the bad press without any tangible change.

On the 90-minute summit the Premier was forced into holding, she said —

It is not a talkfest that the Premier is trying to avoid. It is scrutiny and accountability of our failing justice system.

That was overseen by the same minister. I asked the minister a question today on the number of self-harm and suicide attempts from July last year until now by detainees who were transferred from Banksia Hill to Casuarina Prison. Hon Peter Collier put the same question in the Legislative Council. He received the answer —

Thirty-seven distinct individuals have been held at unit 18 between 20 July 2022 and 15 February 2023.

His second question was —

How many of the juveniles referred to in (1) have attempted self-harm or suicide over this period?

The answer was —

Twenty-five distinct individuals have engaged in self-harm or attempted suicide over this period. Of 34 separate incidents, 25 involved minor self-harm, two involved serious self-harm and seven involved attempted suicide.

What a shameful record. If one government member stands up and says that this also happened under the previous government's watch and is indignant about that but supports what has happened under this government, they are a hypocrite.

This issue emerged in debates in this house last year. In January this year, a panel was formed with a number of the people I mentioned earlier, including former Australian of the Year Fiona Stanley. Fiona Stanley used strong words when she spoke about the Premier's comments and—in her words—his “hardline rhetoric around Banksia Hill Detention Centre detainees”. She pointed out that most children in detention have significant mental health issues that are exacerbated by poor treatment. I had a meeting with a number of people who have engaged at a very high level over the last two decades with children who have ended up at Banksia Hill. I think Fiona Stanley's commentary captured and aligns with all the advice. If we are punitive towards kids, particularly those with foetal alcohol spectrum disorder, who cannot regulate their behaviour and emotions and do not understand consequences—everyone in this chamber is clever enough to understand that—we will not get an outcome. We will only get an angry, caged child who responds in a way that will put staff at risk and affect their ability to leave their cell and undergo any rehabilitation that might be offered.

An article by Hamish Hastie on WAtoday posted on 21 January cites Fiona Stanley saying that the government's commentary on Banksia Hill ignored scientific evidence and —

“Nearly 90 per cent of kids in Banksia have got significant neurological problems, behavioural problems, that make it very, very difficult for them to obey orders, or to not be frightened or not to behave in ways that you might call antisocial,” ...

She pointed out that putting them in a high-security prison—an adult prison—without a rehabilitative focus would exacerbate the behaviours for which they were being criticised and punished. She said —

“You really do need to treat these kids in very special ways and it's still cost-effective, because you're going to prevent all those costs further down the track.

“I've been called a liar by the premier, I guess I can say the same thing about him.”

That was a direct quote from the article. I do not know how it has come to pass that the Premier of the state is in a war of words with such an eminent professional from whom we would ordinarily take advice on child health and development issues. It is a very sad situation and just goes to the arrogance of this government.

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I understand the concerns that are raised by members of our broader community. They have a right to be safe and they need relief from kids or young people who are constantly breaking in and causing damage. That is the reality as well. This government has more money and more resources and has shown that it is prepared to push reforms through the Parliament when they suit its agenda, yet we see very little action from this government and very little attention from this minister on this issue. In fact, the minister said he was very happy today with the response from the government, and that he deserves to keep his portfolio and to keep rolling out the agenda that I think is perpetuating the challenges our communities are facing.

I want to go back to one last thing before I sit down and allow other members to have a say. If anyone is looking for some light reading, an opinion piece was published in *The West Australian* of 8 November last year by Denis Reynolds and Neil Morgan that outlined, I think very succinctly, how the transfer of juveniles to Casuarina is the result of departmental failure under this government. They said that although the Premier, the minister and the director general all claimed that they had no choice than to transfer the kids because of bad behaviour and extensive damage, they actually could have intervened far earlier and responded to custodial inspection reports and information that had been provided, firstly, to protect the staff, and, secondly, to protect the juveniles. They could have prevented what has turned out to be a very expensive situation that the state now needs to deal with. That difficult cohort could have had a very different story wrapped around it had the government not taken a sweep-it-under-the-table-and-ignore-the-situation approach. I recommend that members read the opinion piece by Denis Reynolds and Neil Morgan.

I want to return to what I started with, which is the new-found interest in Carnarvon by the police minister and the Premier, who have literally ignored it for the last six years. The visit by the Prime Minister to the north of the state was undoubtedly triggered by that, and I think also by the good advocacy of the local member up there in highlighting that this issue needs to be addressed. The crime issue in Carnarvon has spiralled out of control on the government's watch, but it has shown no care. It is playing the man and not the ball again when it comes to the member for North West Central, yet when the government had the chance, it failed to put up anyone at the by-election; it completely vacated the field. That is how much members on the other side cared about the north west—they could not even find a candidate to contest it! They did not put up anyone to bring those issues from those communities to the cabinet and the front bench. What an utter disgrace! You have no moral high ground when it comes to those communities—none whatsoever—because if you actually cared, you would have put someone on that ballot paper and given people a chance, and you did not. You turned tail and you ran. As a result, we now have a member for North West Central who has lived in that community, has lived experience of that community and is very well respected in that community and across the electorate. I point out that the behaviour of the Premier and the ministers in this chamber is grubby, politically motivated and unwarranted. It is a disgrace. You should have a red-hot think about how you speak about people and use this chamber for your insinuation and innuendo, because it is grubby. You are all better than that. Do something about the things you are in charge of. Do better when it comes to juveniles in our justice system in this state, because all our communities deserve better. Up to this point, you have failed miserably!

DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe) [5.15 pm]: Acting Speaker.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms C.M. Collins): Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Well, I am actually the member for Cottesloe, but thank you for the promotion!

Mr P.J. Rundle: He's coming back!

The ACTING SPEAKER: Apologies, member for Cottesloe.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Thank you very much, Acting Speaker; I can understand the confusion.

I rise to join this debate. It is fascinating to reflect on what has happened in this chamber since the last term of government, because the previous member for North West Central, the current member for North West Central, other members and I have been alerting the Premier, the Minister for Police and other ministers to the problems in Carnarvon all that time. Up until a few days ago, when the Premier did a trip there with journalists, we have consistently heard from the Minister for Police in particular that there is no problem—nothing to see. He has said that there are no statistics to support the argument, alluding to the fact that members are coming in here and not telling the truth or talking about real stories. Of course, this is not just happening in Carnarvon; it has happened in almost every regional centre above Geraldton, and now we see this problem coming down into Geraldton. Youth crime is having a dramatic effect on those communities. It is a horrendous impact.

There are many levels to this. The people who live in a good number of those towns live in fear. They lie awake at night because of children making noises in their yards. When they drive their cars down the street, depending on where they are driving, their cars can be stoned. Youths are engaged in extreme behaviour, making TikTok videos of racing cars, wrecking cars, attacking police vehicles and chasing police. This behaviour has escalated under the minister's watch. I have heard the debate in this place. The Minister for Police and others have said that there have been issues in these communities for a long time. That is true; there have been issues in many of those communities

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for a long time. But no-one I speak to has seen anything like the level of disorderly criminal behaviour that we are seeing now. It is utterly horrendous.

What are the arguments we hear in this place? First of all, the Minister for Police in particular tells us that the statistics just do not support it. We can go back to *Hansard* again and again to find the minister telling us that the statistics are wrong and there has been no increase in crime, yet the people on the ground in those communities know that it has been escalating. What is the response? I will carry on from what the member for Central Wheatbelt was dealing with at the end of her presentation—the absolutely disgraceful and disgusting treatment that I will also call out. Members on that side like using the phrase “call out”. I will call out the downright bullying of the member for North West Central. I have been in this place for only six years, but there is a general protocol here that when a member comes into this place for the first time, they are treated a little more easily and not subjected to the full force of the other side. Everyone knows that when a new member comes into this place, they are finding their feet. It is a difficult thing for people to get used to. When the member for North West Central got up to talk about crime in Carnarvon, from the very get-go I observed her being attacked by the Minister for Police and subsequently by the Premier in a really vicious and unpleasant way. The minister said that when a person comes into this place, they have to tell the truth. The allusion was that somehow or other, the member was lying. I tell members what: I have got to know the member for North West Central. I did not know her well before the by-election other than by reputation as the electorate officer in the previous member’s office. I then got to know her as the candidate running in the by-election, and I have a deep respect for that member. She is a passionate representative of her community who deeply understands her community and is committed to business in her community. What I have heard in this place, I honestly find disgusting. If members on the government side, particularly female members, were treated like this, they would be absolutely pillorying us on this side, yet government members are doing that to the member for North West Central. Fair criticism is fair criticism, but what is happening is absolute bullying.

The member is not here at the moment, which is perhaps fortunate because I can talk more forcefully about this without her here. It has been disgraceful behaviour by the Premier, the Minister for Police and the Minister for Environment—surprisingly to me, because I did not think that he was someone who would stoop to this level. They have made assertions and allegations and talked about innuendo and the implication that somehow or other the member for North West Central and her husband, who owns a hotel in that town, are part of the problem and they are not solving it. Stop it! It is disgraceful when those members come in here and do that to a member in the way that it has been done. It is disgraceful. I might say, furthermore, that if the police minister, the Premier and the Minister for Environment—why he would involve himself in this disgraceful behaviour is beyond me—think that making some changes to the alcohol-serving rules in that town will somehow or other solve the problems of Carnarvon, they are deluded fools. Yes, alcohol is a symptom of the problems in Carnarvon and it exacerbates some of the behavioural problems, but that is not what is causing youth crime in Carnarvon. It is not the root cause. Members opposite should not think that they can come in here and somehow or other bully the member for North West Central, and bully the publicans and the bottle shop owners in Carnarvon, which they have done. It has been publicly said in this place. The Premier has blamed them and said that that is the problem. If government members think that they can solve the problem by putting in place more restrictions on alcohol, then, as I said, they are deluded fools.

I have spent a lot of time in the north of this state since becoming a member. I have visited the Fitzroy Valley four times. I have visited Carnarvon more than half a dozen times. I have been to other centres—Newman, Tom Price and the rest. I do not see these problems in Tom Price, but I have seen exactly the same problems in East Newman, all through the Fitzroy Valley and from Broome, Halls Creek and Fitzroy Crossing through to Kununurra. I was prevented from getting to Derby by a storm just a few weeks ago, but Derby has even worse problems. I have very reliable reports about this from the president of the Shire of Derby—West Kimberley and others in that community. We cannot visit these areas because if we were to drive a car there, it would be stoned daytime or night-time. The police minister has denied that these horrendous issues exist, but suddenly he has discovered that they do exist. These problems will not be solved by alcohol restrictions. Alcohol restrictions will help, but why will these problems not be solved? Because I have seen firsthand that if people have cash in their hand or if there is money in those communities, alcohol will find its way there. I saw it happen in the Fitzroy Valley during the COVID pandemic. Sometime ago, the community around Fitzroy Crossing had introduced alcohol restrictions that led to the first generation of children to be born without foetal alcohol spectrum disorder. I spent a lot of time talking to the various communities there and they were so proud of that, but when that flush of money from JobKeeper and JobSeeker payments came into those communities, particularly the community around Fitzroy Crossing, which happened under our federal government’s watch, the sly groggers came out. I literally saw mountains of spirit bottles and full-strength beer cans piling up in that community. The alcohol was still coming in. This government can put in place restrictions and I have no doubt that those restrictions will have some limited effect. But I might say that particularly for Carnarvon, alcohol is very accessible because Carnarvon is only five hours away from Geraldton, so alcohol will continue to find its way into those communities.

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I do not pretend that the minister's job is simple. The new Minister for Community Services has picked up an enormously onerous task. She has already shown in this place that she is taking it seriously and studying or whatever, but whatever this government is doing is insufficient. It will not deal with the issue. I have heard again and again in this place about what this government has been doing in Carnarvon. We have heard about the Target 120 program. I like the intent of and the philosophy behind that program, but it is a voluntary program—people have to access it voluntarily—and, of course, it needs staff. We have heard from the Leader of the Opposition and others that that program has not commenced in many of the places that need it. That might be happening in Joondalup or Bunbury, but, to be very frank, the problem is not there. My sister lives quite near to Joondalup and, yes, there are some issues in that community, and, yes, there are some issues in Bunbury, but I can tell members that anything in the metropolitan area and the south of this state pales into insignificance compared with the issues faced in these other communities.

Just before Christmas, I visited an Aboriginal community in the industrial area of Carnarvon. One of the elders there spent two hours with me, taking me around just to houses. There was no fanfare. We were just visiting and talking to families in that community. He was a really gorgeous man who was desperate to help his community get ahead. All the people I met in that community were just trying to get by and get on. There were families who were trying to make sure that their kids went to school and their health was looked after and so on, but I can tell members this—as I say, I have been all through the north and I have seen these communities—during that walk around, I could not comprehend the level of sickness and illness in that community. This community is literally a walk away from the centre of Carnarvon where, we are told by government members, all the government agencies are working. I saw darling little children. I know that members all love kids. I love kids. They are the meaning of life and I have six of my own. I know that all members have deep empathy for them and I do, too. I saw the most darling little kids, one and two-year-olds, with scabs in their ears and discharge coming out of their ears and nose. It is absolutely certain that they have glue ear and that they are functionally deaf and cannot hear anything. If they are not treated in the first couple of years, there is a high probability that they will be deaf or have profound hearing difficulties for life and they will never be able to learn.

I observed multiple young mothers who were young teenagers. The Premier made a comment—this is another form of dog whistling, members—that parents have to parent. I did not speak to Ngala directly, but a colleague of mine did. The information that I received from Ngala was that a dozen mothers were under 14 years of age. How in God's name does a 14-year-old girl parent their child? How can the Premier in this place hold those dear young girls, who love their little babies, to account for not parenting? For goodness sake! How can they possibly parent? When I was in Fitzroy Crossing, I spoke to a delightful young Aboriginal man who was working in the medical centre in Halls Creek. He told me that one of the problems is that we have a third generation of mothers who are 16 years or younger. How do any members expect those mothers, who did not have a mother and whose mother did not have a mother, to parent these children? What a ridiculous statement to come into this place and make: parents can parent. Yes, I expect to be held accountable if I am not parenting my children properly. I have no excuse. I had loving parents who put everything into raising me and, hopefully, I am doing a reasonable job with my kids and my kids can go on. But how can those parents? That is the problem. When I was walking around that community in Carnarvon, which was just a stone's throw or a comfortable walk from the centre of town, I saw dear little children, two or three years old, and every single tooth in their mouth was black. Every single one—black. Gum disease is caused by bacteria that breed in children's gums when they do not clean their teeth. It infects their brain and effectively has the same impact as foetal alcohol spectrum disorder. It causes permanent cognitive harm to those children.

It was not only the odd one or two children and it was not only children; it also affected adults in the community. I met the most delightful people, older gentlemen and ladies in the community trying to get by, and almost all of them had serious and clearly visible untreated illness or medical issues. Why am I talking about that? The reason I am mentioning it is that the government's programs are failing. Its programs are not reaching those children in that community. Its programs are not reaching the adults in that community. Until we are dealing with it, until those kids are going to school, until those kids' hearing problems have been resolved and fixed in the communities, we will not see any different. It was heartbreaking to look at the little children in that community—I have seen it in other communities—and to realise that the chances of them ending up in Banksia Hill Juvenile Detention Centre are substantially higher than the chances of them going on to have meaningful and productive lives. If members want to know why the member for North West Central comes in here and talks about this passionately and why we talk about this passionately, that is why.

The Premier has come into this place and blamed parents for not parenting. There has been an unseemly and disgraceful attack on the member for North West Central pretty well since she has come here. Then somehow the Premier thinks alcohol controls are magically going to solve this problem. That all tells me the government is not taking the problem seriously. I have said it in this place before that I know the former Minister for Community Services is a compassionate person and she cares. I am absolutely certain that the new Minister for Community

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Services is a compassionate person and she cares. But government members come back to this place again and again and tell us the government has all these programs in place.

[Member's time extended.]

Dr D.J. HONEY: If government members tell us that those programs are working, they are betraying the future of those children. They will not solve the youth crime —

Mr M.J. Folkard: Will you take an interjection, sir?

Dr D.J. HONEY: No, thank you very much.

The government will not solve those youth crime problems in that community, because it starts with the little kids and working individually with the families. As I said, I applaud the concept of Target 120, but the simple truth is that when it relies on, first, having the resources in place, and, second, people voluntarily participating, it will continue to fail to deliver the outcomes that it can. We have heard in this place some statistics on people going into that program who have done well, and why? It is because, to be frank, they are probably not the real hard-nut problems in the first place. We see children who cannot go home because of the dysfunction in their houses. Until government services are delivered directly into those communities and into those households, we are not going to see a change. The government is relying on young mothers in their teens to avail themselves of the various government services in town. As I said, the reason I mentioned that example in Carnarvon is that we could not have a starker example of a modern prosperous community of around 3 000 people, yet within a short walking distance there is deprivation that I think the great majority of Western Australians and Australians could not comprehend. I make it very, very clear that I do not blame the people in those communities. The people I met were trying to get by and do the right thing. They want to do the right thing, but the services are not being delivered in a way that is making any difference.

Do not come back into the debate attacking and saying that it is an exaggeration. There is no exaggeration. The member for North West Central has only ever told the truth about what she is seeing in Carnarvon. I have seen it firsthand on a number of occasions and people whom I deeply respect and trust in that community see it again and again. They do not feel safe in their own homes. If they see something untoward happening and they try to intervene in the gentlest of ways, they run a high risk of being physically attacked and beaten up in those communities. The police are doing what they can. I want to tackle that.

Again, one of the arguments we hear constantly in this place from the Minister for Police—the Premier likes to pull the same stunt—is that when we are talking about this, we are criticising the police. The minister knows that I have not worn a uniform; I respect the fact that he has and I respect his service to our community in that regard. Nevertheless, I have worked closely with the police for six and a half years.

Mr M.J. Folkard interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: For goodness sake! I and we have the deepest respect for the police. I know they face an enormously difficult task. They have been tasked with reducing Aboriginal incarceration. Again, that is a noble goal, but the simple fact is that part of the problem is looking the other way on things. Why? It is not because they want to. It is because they are told to.

Mr M.J. Folkard interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Burns Beach!

Dr D.J. HONEY: It is because they are told. There is pressure from above. That is why. That is one of the problems that has exacerbated this issue. To get back to my core theme with the police, I have deep respect for the police. I know how hard their job is.

Mr P. Papalia: What did you just say?

Dr D.J. HONEY: Read *Hansard*, minister, if you want to catch up.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Hansard will find it very difficult to record if we keep shouting.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I know how hard their job is. I know how dedicated the police are. In fact, I spent a plane journey from Broome to Perth not so long ago with a partner of a police officer who was telling me about this officer's experience in Halls Creek and what they had to live with and put up with and so on. I know how dedicated they are. I know how much they care. I know how much they agonise over the fate of, especially, those children in those communities who could go on to have productive lives but, because of their circumstances, probably never will and will probably suffer premature death because of various health issues and the lifestyle that they are going into.

This is not an attack on the police. We and I admire the police and the job they do. This is not an attack on the public servants. We and I admire the public servants. I admire those staff who work in the Department of Communities. I have thought about the role. I do not think that I would have the emotional resilience to go in and do that job day

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after day, week after week, month after month, year after year. I have the greatest admiration for the job they are doing. But the simple fact is that although members opposite stand and just defend what the government is doing and say it is doing everything right, it is not. It is six years in. It is not one year in. It is not two years in. It is not a few months in. It is six years into its term of government. It has had a chance to see whether what it is doing is working. But what is happening in those communities? What is happening in those communities is that month on month, year on year, crime is getting worse, dysfunction is getting worse, and, dreadfully, the fate of those people, especially those dear kids, is getting worse in those communities. What the government is doing is not working. Please do not stand up in response in this place and just tell us we are fools and we do not know, and whatever, and we are attacking. Please tell us what the government will do differently.

The minister may not value my opinion on any of this, but I am happy to sit down with him and work through it because it is not a problem for the government's side and it is not a problem for our side; it is a problem for us as a Parliament, as elected leaders in this state. This is getting worse and worse and what the government is doing is not sufficient. It is not enough. It does not mean we need more dollars; it means that the programs have to be reviewed. It has to come back. If the government just keeps doing what it is doing, the outcome will keep going in the direction it is going in now, and that is deterioration.

It is devastating for the communities generally and it is devastating for people's mental wellbeing. It is devastating for businesses in those communities; crime is one of the reasons that those communities cannot get staff, even in government agencies. Worst of all, a whole generation of children—I have heard others use the same phrase, but I have used it for some time now—is effectively being abandoned. It may not be the government's intention, but those children are effectively being abandoned and there is a high certainty that too many of them—obviously, not all of them—will end up being involved in criminal activity, going to juvenile or adult prison, and dying prematurely because of health and lifestyle issues. That is a dreadful outcome. The government needs to do something differently. It cannot tell us that what it is doing at the moment is working. Thank you.

MS S.E. WINTON (Wanneroo — Minister for Community Services) [5.40 pm]: I would like to make a contribution on behalf of the government. We will not be supporting this motion; I put that on the record first of all. I noted the member for Cottesloe's contribution and to a certain extent I believed he was sincere when he said that the issue of juvenile crime in various parts of Western Australia is a bipartisan problem. But if that is truly the case, we have had more than an hour and a half of contributions from opposition members, and there has not been one single alternative suggested. The member for Cottesloe sat down at the end of his contribution saying that he wants to work with us and that it is a joint problem, but I did not hear one suggestion for an alternative approach. Not only have we not heard any suggestions over the last hour and 45 minutes that I have had to sit through, but also I do not think we have heard much over the last six years from the Liberal Party in opposition about what it would do about the issues we are debating. I do not ever hear any alternatives being suggested.

From my perspective, politics is a contest of ideas; that is how we get good policy going. We actually need the opposition to step up, pick up the bat and come up with solutions. To be fair, earlier this week or last week, the Leader of the Liberal Party suggested that the opposition would inject \$300 million into the community services sector, but that is just a cash splash. There was no detail about which parts of the sector require funding or which targeted programs the Liberal Party had identified that are working; it was just, "We're going to give everyone \$300 million", and that would miraculously solve the problem. When members opposite come up with ideas, they actually need to be targeted and strategic, and talk about real initiatives.

I know other members want to speak tonight, so I will try to keep this brief, but I really want to take the opportunity to speak briefly about the important work that is being done by child protection workers throughout the state and the thousands of people who work in the community services sector, delivering extraordinary services right around the state. I value them, I recognise them and I think they do an incredible job. There are also hundreds of Aboriginal groups right around the state that do extraordinary work, whether it is in schools or in targeted programs through the health system. They have been doing innovative, great work for many, many years. I know that to be the case, because I taught in Fitzroy Crossing for three years. Somehow, though, when I listened to opposition members tonight and their suggestion that the government has failed, it sounded to me that they were, by extension, suggesting that all the people who are currently working in this space or have worked in this space over many, many years have also failed and that they are not working. I find that offensive and disrespectful of all the people who work in these important sectors.

As I have mentioned before in this house, the McGowan government has made record investments into the child protection portfolio. Since 2017, we have employed 250 additional FTE; that is a workforce increase of 35 per cent. We support the important work that child protection practitioners do. In fact, earlier, during question time, I highlighted the important work we are doing in providing targeted professional development opportunities to make sure that child protection practitioners can be the skilled workforce we need when we are increasingly dealing

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with children with backgrounds of trauma. I find it extraordinary that opposition members can just stand up and say, “You’re not doing enough; it’s not working”, and have no recognition for the things that are happening.

I have met with the Western Australian Council of Social Service; it was really wonderful to be able to attend its new year breakfast, an event it holds every year to celebrate the sector, bring everyone together, network, set goals and inspire each other to do the good work that will happen in 2023. I have also met with representatives since then to understand their needs and priorities going forward as they represent a sector that is one of the biggest employers in the state. In last year’s budget we provided some \$450 million for community sector organisations to do their important work. Additionally, there was \$160 million of new funding for all the organisations that are working in the regions with vulnerable people and families in need, doing that important work.

I want to briefly talk again about Target 120. It is really good to hear that the opposition supports that program. At its heart it is a partnership between families and juveniles at risk. It has been rolled out across 20 locations in the state, the government has committed \$31 million to it, and it is making an impact. It is diverting young, vulnerable people away from the youth justice system. It is working, with nearly half of the people engaged in it being diverted from the juvenile justice system. This is the kind of intervention strategy that we need to keep working on. In fact, early intervention is a key priority of this government, and we are delivering programs worth \$136 million to do just that.

It is also interesting that more than 200 of the children and families who have been involved with Target 120 have been successfully steered away from the youth justice system. However, we know that families, children and youth are complex, so it is an ongoing process. It is not something we can just throw some money at, provide a program and solve the problem. These problems are ongoing, generational problems, and Target 120 will have a continuing impact on those areas. As well as Target 120, we are piloting another program called Target 120 Plus. That program will provide culturally appropriate and tailored programs for young people’s individual needs. It will be a wraparound approach to dealing with at-risk youth. It will include in-home components to help parents develop parenting skills and promote healthy child development.

I want to briefly talk about the domestic violence portfolio, because that was addressed by the Leader of the Opposition. I want to take a few moments to emphasise the work that the state government has done in this area. All members would know that domestic violence has a direct impact on children and young people in families. Therefore, when we are looking at providing programs to support children and young people, we also need to support what is happening at home. We know that too many kids are placed in a situation whereby family and domestic violence is a daily occurrence. This is the government that created the first-ever prevention of family and domestic violence ministry. That shows the priority that we place on this important area.

I want to outline to the house some of the things that we have done. Since we have come into government, we have committed over \$160 million to make sure that we have strong laws that will keep victims and families safe and hold perpetrators to account. I want to highlight one thing in particular. Last week, I was in Armadale to announce that a contract has been awarded to Hope Community Services and Yorgum Healing Services Aboriginal Corporation to jointly run the Armadale family and domestic violence hub. That will be the third hub that this government is rolling out, after having successfully rolled out hubs in Mirrabooka and Kalgoorlie. The Armadale hub is going ahead and, hopefully, will be open at the end of this year or the beginning of next year, as the services go through the important co-design process of what that hub will look like. In real terms, that will mean that women who are victims of family and domestic violence will have one safe place to go to tell their story. They will not have to go to the doctor. They will not have to seek legal advice. They will not have to go to all these different places. It will be a wraparound service that will provide housing, legal advice, financial assistance, counselling and medical support in one place to support those women. That will make a huge difference. We are getting great feedback from the women, and their children, who have utilised those new hubs in Mirrabooka and Kalgoorlie. We will also be establishing the fourth of those hubs in Broome as one of our election commitments. I know that the member for Kimberley is pretty happy about that.

I want to highlight a couple more things about the family violence legislative reforms that we have undertaken, because these things are part of the story for families, particularly in some of the places that I have lived and worked in. They include specific things like making sure that we keep perpetrators accountable. They include better protection of victim-survivors with shuttle conferencing in court so that victim-survivors do not need to face their abusers, automatic recognition of violence restraining orders from other Australian states, the creation of the new offence of non-fatal strangulation and the creation of a new category of serial violence offenders for those who have two or three convictions. They also include, importantly, amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act to support victims to leave their abusive environment. We know that victims of domestic violence find it difficult to leave. Statistically, it takes a woman about seven attempts before she has the strength, I suppose, to do that. Once a woman has made the decision to leave, it is really important that we provide all the supports to make sure that the violence is not repeated or the same cycle is continued by her returning to the perpetrator.

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I will finish on this note, in the way that I began. I know that the challenges that my department is facing are extremely difficult. But I can tell members that the work that those people in the department do is quite extraordinary. People do not go into this line of work, working with our most vulnerable children and families, unless they care about kids and families and want to make a difference. I commend every single one of them. We will continue to support them, and we have supported them, with our continued investment into the child protection system of over 250 extra full-time equivalents. I also want to acknowledge again the extraordinary work that is being done by the various providers in the community services sector. We value them. We invest strongly in them. We provided over \$450 million in the last budget to support them in the extraordinary work that they do.

What we need to do, to go back to the contribution of the member for Cottesloe, is be careful about how we debate these sensitive subjects. Not all the crime that is happening in Carnarvon or anywhere can be referred to all of the kids in that town.

Dr D.J. Honey: I didn't say that.

Ms S.E. WINTON: I did not say that you said that, so you might want to listen to me. You are supersensitive.

When we talk about these towns, we need to be careful that we do not paint all the kids who live there as "those kids". There is a real danger that that is what is happening. Likewise, I am also concerned when opposition members keep talking down the lack of progress. In doing that, they are talking down the very important heroes who are at the coalface and get up every single day and do the most extraordinary work. If you keep saying that nothing good is happening out there and that no-one is making a difference, what are you saying about those people and the commitment that they are giving? I would caution the opposition on doing that.

In summary, I will say this about my portfolio. I appreciate the opposition acknowledging that it is a difficult portfolio, and it is, but it is the most important work that anyone can do. When I was a teacher for 27 years, and particularly in Fitzroy for three years, I found that the best way to solve problems was to work with people and come up with joint solutions. I assure the house that is what I will continue to do. I am not going to politicise these issues, but I will call it out when other people do it. That is why I keep calling it out. If members really care about what is happening, come up with some solutions, because I will listen to them.

MR T.J. HEALY (Southern River — Parliamentary Secretary) [5.59 pm]: I rise to also speak against the motion. I would like to address a few of the things that have been said by opposition members. I would like to concur with the comments of the Minister for Community Services. I also look forward to the contribution from the Minister for Police.

I am very proud to have been the local member of Parliament for my community for the last six years. It has been a great honour. I first of all want to commend the Speaker, the former Minister for Police, Michelle Roberts, a very experienced member of both the previous and current government, who oversaw a great period of growth and did great work during her time as police minister. Our current police minister is one of the most decorated and longest serving ministers. There was a veiled compliment from the member for Cottesloe for the police minister about his service to the community and Western Australia.

It is also worth recalling the chaos. When I came to this chamber, my seat was a safe Liberal seat; I was not supposed to be elected. I was elected because of the frustration of my community with the former government's police ministers and the bungling of the meth crisis and the regional and metropolitan police districts. I want to acknowledge Rob Johnson and Liza Harvey. Bless their cotton socks, but they caused a lot of damage to the Liberal Party brand and to the Western Australian community, and I am thankful that the adults are in charge now.

Metropolitan policing and regional policing in particular were abandoned by the previous Liberal-National government. Access to policing is very important for all members of our community—when people can walk into a police station and see a police officer or make a call and connect with a local service. The systems implemented by the previous Liberal government made that harder. I also give a particular shout-out to the Gosnells, Canning Vale, Cannington and Armadale Police Stations, which look after all the members of my community. As many people will know, we increased the operations at a number of stations to 24-hour access. Just about every one of our police stations is a 24-hour station in terms of the walk-in counter hours. That was very well received by the community and the community responded very well. I acknowledge that extended hours came to be at the Armadale, Cannington and Ellenbrook Police Stations. Members will be aware that hours were extended at the Gosnells and Canning Vale Police Stations, as well as at a number of other police stations, and the number of police—human bodies—available in our districts was also increased. The resources available to them were also increased, be that technology or vehicles. I commend both the previous minister and the current minister for those things.

There are new police stations at a number of different sites. I do not want to go into too much detail to allow my other colleagues to speak. We know that there has been a great focus on regional police and regional communities.

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I look forward to being at my first police graduation with the minister tomorrow night. As is often stated as a failure, we are supplying 950 additional officers. It will be my first graduation tomorrow, but the minister has told this chamber many times that he is continually at the graduations of our fantastic new serving police officers. He will be off on Friday morning to recruit even more from overseas. This is a government that is committed to increasing police numbers and ensuring that we have the most experienced and supported police officers.

I will give some acknowledgement to the Nationals WA. I will talk about some of the speeches in a moment. The Nationals WA used to be the party of the regions. It is, of course, the Labor Party that continuously looks after metropolitan and regional communities. There are better work facilities. I know the minister recently went out to Beverley and saw the new police facilities there. There have been refurbishments, maintenance and investment in infrastructure and technology. A number of police officers speak to me about the benefits of body-worn cameras in protecting the work that they do. I am not sure whether they make paperwork easier, but we are certainly getting very positive feedback about the interactions that happen after incidents. There has also been the addition of personal issue mobile smart devices.

I will briefly speak on a couple of contributions to the motion. The Leader of the Opposition, the member for Moore, spoke incorrectly, but I will allow the minister to correct him completely. He told us that crime rates were out of control and that there were cycles of crime. Again, he did not reflect on what was inherited by this government, the scourge of meth and what has been done in the past six years. I commend the police, the police ministers and the police commissioners for their leadership. A number of inappropriate things were said about the current police minister. The member did misquote, but I will allow that to be corrected.

The member for Vasse did not clarify whether she had been to Laverton or Leonora. She spoke about a number of things, including her good mate Peter Dutton, who I believe did go there. I am not sure whether she stated that he invited her or he did not.

The member for Central Wheatbelt is still quite angry about a number of internal party matters. I have to commend her, though. The Leader of the Opposition struggled to make a 30-minute contribution. I do not think there has ever been a challenge that the member for Central Wheatbelt, the former Leader of the Opposition, could not meet.

It is always wonderful to hear the member for Cottesloe speak. I love to hear his advice about how we should speak to women. That is always a great thing. I always like to write down some quirks from Margaret Quirk. They are always wonderful comments. You could write a book about the quips and quirks from the member for Landsdale. I think there could be a second volume. I appreciate that *Hansard* will one day assist me and all members of this chamber in how the Liberal Party talks to women.

Just in closing, I interjected several times on the member for Cottesloe. It drives me a little nuts that the member for Cottesloe has not read the standing orders. For future use, if the member for Cottesloe would like to raise a matter, he can use standing orders 95 to 97. When he stands and talks about interruptions or says that he cannot hear or is unhappy about the content, standing order 95 or 96 might assist him to close that case.

MR D.A.E. SCAIFE (Cockburn) [6.07 pm]: I rise to speak against this motion. I will pick up on some of the comments that the member for Southern River has just made. In my response to the Premier's Statement last week, I congratulated the people who have been promoted to various positions as part of both the government's cabinet reshuffle and the opposition parties' reshuffle. But it seems to me that even though we have new leaders, we have the same energy in this room as we did last year. The Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Liberal Party come in here and lecture us for almost an hour and 45 minutes in a way that has no energy and no real engagement with the issues and would be better placed in a boring university lecture hall. It is not clear that the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Liberal Party really care about the issues that they are raising. It does not seem to come from a place of sincerity. I can say that the member for Central Wheatbelt showed some fire today, and I welcome that. I do not necessarily agree with the member for Central Wheatbelt, but I welcome some robust debate.

Mr P. Papalia: And energy.

Mr D.A.E. SCAIFE: Yes, some energy and some real engagement with the issues. Even if I disagree with the member for Central Wheatbelt, I believe that she cares about these issues and has something of value to say. I struggled to engage with what the Leader of the Opposition or the Leader of the Liberal Party were saying. It seems to me that they do not have the fortitude for it.

I want to pick up on something that the member for Cottesloe apparently said earlier today. He criticised government backbenchers for voting on bills that they had not read or did not understand. Member for Cottesloe, the saying about throwing stones in glass houses springs to mind. If we want to talk about members of this chamber who do not understand the legislation they are debating, members opposite do not need me to give them a speech; they just need a mirror. I have seen many examples of members opposite asking ministers questions, including during consideration in detail, when the answer they are searching for is literally in the bill. It is literally in the clause that

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they are asking a question about. You know what, if the bill is too complicated for members opposite, there is a thing called an explanatory memorandum. They have been around for a long time. Members opposite can go and read one of those. I thought that was pretty rich coming from the member for Cottesloe. It underlines that the opposition does not have an effective team that is working together on these issues; we have fragmented contributions from different members of the chamber.

On the topic of teams, the Minister for Police posed an absolutely fair question to the Leader of the Liberal Party during question time yesterday. The Minister for Police asked whether the Leader of the Liberal Party in this place supports Ian Goodenough's views on banning high-powered firearms. That is a legitimate question to ask on an issue of community safety because the genesis of the ban on high-powered firearms was a request from the Western Australia Police Force. It was a request.

Dr D.J. Honey: Is that the problem in Carnarvon?

Mr D.A.E. SCAIFE: The member for Cottesloe cannot have it both ways. He cannot come in here and say that the opposition supports the police while his federal colleague is not just debating the issue in Parliament or writing opinion pieces, but provocatively posing with a high-powered firearm in a video to make the point that he does not agree with the Western Australia Police Force. That is the reality—the member cannot walk both sides of the street on it.

Dr D.J. Honey: Fix that and we'll see—no relevance to crime in Carnarvon.

Mr D.A.E. SCAIFE: From the member for Cottesloe's interjections, it sounds like he does not support the request from WA Police for a ban on high-powered firearms. He says it will not make a difference.

Dr D.J. Honey interjected.

Mr D.A.E. SCAIFE: Those are literally the words that he just said. He is not interested in the fact that a true approach to community safety means we have to take a range of measures. The Liberal Party comes in here bleating about how it supports WA Police, but members of the WA Liberal Party are running around actively and provocatively campaigning against a ban on high-powered firearms that was requested by WA Police. Members do not have to take my word for it because I have the photo of the federal member for Moore, Ian Goodenough, on top of a ute with a high-powered firearm. It is not something asinine like an opinion piece; it is a video he posed for to make his point.

It raises the question of whether the Leader of the Liberal Party supports the federal member for Moore. He is the only Liberal federal lower house member who represents the metropolitan area in Western Australia. It is a fair question. Do members know what the response was from the Leader of the Liberal Party? I think this was extraordinary. She interjected on the Minister for Police and said, "He's not on our team." I tell you now, *Hansard* will prove me right on that point. She interjected to say that Ian Goodenough is not on her team. That is curious. It is a shame the Leader of the Liberal Party is not in the chamber because I wanted to fact check whether Ian Goodenough is on the same team as the member for Vasse. I went on the WA Liberal Party website.

Ms M.M. Quirk: A different faction.

Mr D.A.E. SCAIFE: It is different faction, but it is the same team. That is the question, member for Landsdale. Those are the words that were used—"same team".

I went on the Liberal Party website. Handily, there are only four buttons across the top of the homepage. One says "Our party". The second one says, "Our team". It is a drop-down menu. I went to the drop-down menu under "Our team" because I thought that would tell me who is on the team the member for Vasse is on. I clicked on it. Lo and behold, members, number one on the page is Ian Goodenough, MP, the federal member for Moore. There is a real question about the member for Vasse's interjection. She said Ian Goodenough is not on her team, yet the Liberal Party's website says that he is. I then printed out the next page with the rest of the team. It does not get any better, members; I tell you that! Going back to what I was saying before about the opposition having fortitude on debates, looking at the intellectual capacity of the team that the Liberal Party has been reduced to in the lower house federally, it is a pretty sad state of affairs. Members only have to read the quality of debates to see that that is the case with the Liberal Party's federal lower house members; it is also the case with Liberal members of state Parliament.

It seems to me that Ian Goodenough is incontrovertibly on the same team as the Leader of the Liberal Party. If he is on her team, she needs to take some leadership on this issue and get him off her team. I assume that if he is not on the Leader of the Liberal Party's team, maybe he is in some other team called "The Clan" or something like that, and she should take action. It was pretty disgraceful to see the lack of action from the Leader of the Liberal Party in New South Wales when it came to one of its members of Parliament, and I would hate to see a weak response like that in Western Australia as well. If the Leader of the Liberal Party wants to be taken seriously on supporting our WA Police, she should tell members of her team who oppose a ban on high-powered firearms to pull their head in.

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I want to go to some of the comments made by the member for Central Wheatbelt. As I said at the outset, I was pleased to see the member for Central Wheatbelt freed from the shackles of leadership and showing some fire in this debate. I welcome robust debate in this place. Unfortunately, we do not see enough of it.

There were sentiments in what the member for Central Wheatbelt said that I agree with. Community safety is a complicated issue. I do not think anybody denies that. It requires a whole series of responses. It requires a penal response because that is what society expects. A penal response is required for specific and general deterrence as well. But, yes, we want one of the aims of our criminal justice system to be rehabilitation. We cannot achieve rehabilitation just through our corrections estate; we have to provide additional community services including child protection; in some cases, alcohol controls and restrictions; drug and alcohol counselling; and other family support services. We have to provide a whole suite of community services. We have to take a nuanced approach to community safety, particularly when it comes to dealing with juvenile offenders. They are vulnerable people and we should aim to rehabilitate them to the maximum degree possible because they have their lives ahead of them and we should want them to be contributing members of society.

I really take issue with the criticism made of the Minister for Corrective Services. He was very clear in question time today about his three priorities. I do not think it is at all controversial that the Minister for Corrective Services' first priority is community safety. I do not see how that is contentious at all. He then said that his second priority is the safety of staff. That is the second priority because staff have to be confident to do their job in order to protect the young people in their care as well as the community. It sits above the third priority, which is to protect those young people and make sure they can become contributing members of society. The second priority is necessary to reach the third priority. I do not think the hierarchy of priorities is at all contentious. The point the Minister for Corrective Services has made time and again is that we cannot simply have fantastical solutions to the issue of juvenile crime and we cannot treat all juvenile offenders the same. The reality is that a small cohort of mainly older offenders was causing significant disruption at Banksia Hill Detention Centre. That disruption was a safety risk for not only the staff, but also the other offenders who were being housed at that facility. It was disrupting their access to education and therapy, and it was putting their personal safety at risk. If somebody could simply wave a magic wand and make that all better, the government would have done that by now, but the reality is that we need a nuanced approach to this. That is what this government is doing. The Minister for Community Services outlined a whole range of initiatives that this government is implementing. Is there more to do? Obviously, there is always more to do. We in the Labor Party know that more than anybody else that there is always more to do, but we are getting on with it.

The single biggest mistake of the previous government that we were lumbered with was the closure of Rangeview as a juvenile remand facility. The problem with that decision was that there is now only one juvenile facility in Western Australia, so it is very difficult to separate problem cohorts from the general cohort. It also means that the remand population is mixed in with the general population. One of the challenges with the remand population is that because they are generally in there for only a short time, we do not have the opportunity to do the interventions with them that we might do with the general population, who are in there for longer. Because they might be in there for short sentences of weeks or months, there is not an opportunity to give the educational programs, therapeutic programs and all those sorts of supports to that population, so that population can become incredibly problematic. The Minister for Corrective Services has been up-front about that. He has been clear that that is a problem. He has even said that he would be willing to advocate for a youth remand facility to be built. But, as members can imagine, it is pretty hard to find a local government area that is willing to make the land available to build a youth remand facility. Once that kind of facility is lost, which it was under the previous government—it was its decision—it is very hard to get it back. That facility cannot be put out in the middle of nowhere; it has to be built within 100 kilometres of the metropolitan area. If there is a local government that the opposition is aware would be willing to accommodate a youth remand facility, it should stump up and say it. So far, I have not heard it. I am not surprised that I have not heard it, because the Minister for Corrective Services has clearly placed on the record that it is an issue that vexes him. It is not an easy problem to solve.

In the absence of a separate facility, the Minister for Corrective Services gazetted part of Casuarina as a separate facility. Sure, it is not ideal, but it is a standalone facility. It is not like what happened to Banksia Hill detainees under the previous government, who were put into the general facility at Casuarina; this is a separate standalone facility for those juvenile detainees. Sure, it is not perfect, but it was the best option that was available to the government. From what I can tell, although there will always be ups and downs, it appears to be making progress in terms of allowing the general population, who were not causing major issues, to access the therapeutic supports they need. I congratulate the Minister for Corrective Services for doing the work of government, which is to not let the perfect get in the way of the good, and to make the hard decisions that lead to progress.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr D.A.E. SCAIFE: I turn now to the range of initiatives the state government has been implementing to protect our communities. As I said earlier, community safety is not an issue that is amenable to simple solutions or a single

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solution; we have to have a range of initiatives. I have to say that this Minister for Police and his predecessor have been hard at work on policing and community policing, and have ensured that our police force is resourced with not only the laws, but also the resources they need to combat serious crime. I point to the example of Operation Regional Shield, which is an initiative of the WA police that ensures that we put extra support into regional areas that are experiencing increases in crime, like what members have been talking about in terms of car ramming or rock throwing. If regional communities have been experiencing that, this government has put resources into a dedicated operation to make sure that we address those issues; it has resourced the WA police to do their job in dealing with those issues.

In the metropolitan area, the government introduced protected entertainment precincts, which I know have been very well received by the communities that surround those entertainment precincts. I am sure the member for Hillarys would agree, as would the members for Mandurah and Dawesville. That has been very well accepted because the police now have the tools they need to keep violent offenders out of those entertainment precincts, so they are not in Northbridge, Hillarys or Scarborough on a Friday or Saturday night causing more problems. That is a preventive measure; that is a good thing. I commend the minister for it.

We also passed our anti-consorting laws, an initiative that both the Attorney General and the Minister for Police were involved with. They are really important laws to tackle organised crime. Many—not all—of the problems that we face in community safety can be linked to organised crime, such as the drug trade and its knock-on effects in terms of crime. The unlawful consorting laws and anti-insignia laws are already being used by our courts to disrupt the activities of outlaw motorcycle gangs. I welcome those laws. Constituents have written to me in favour of those laws. They have been a great tool to put in the toolbox of the WA police.

The last thing I want to point to is something that we did during our last term in government, which was to ban online sexual harassment in the form of sharing explicit imagery. The opposition often wants to talk about media-grabbing examples of crime in our communities, which are actually generally in decline, but I never hear any conversations about the types of crime that happen online that can be absolutely devastating to people, and particularly women. This government took nation-leading action in legislating against what is colloquially termed “revenge porn”. I do not call it that; it is sexual abuse. That is plainly what it is. We took nation-leading action in outlawing that. In fact, a friend of a friend of mine was one of the first victims to benefit from those laws, after her partner had distributed explicit images of her in retaliation for a break-up. The perpetrator had to face the consequences of his action. That sent a message to not only him, but also others that that type of behaviour is totally unacceptable in our society.

Those are just four things off the top of my head that cover a broad spectrum of things that this government is doing to ensure that our community is kept safe.

I want to focus on one last general area. I have spoken about how we have equipped our police with the laws that they need to tackle serious crime, but I want to talk about how else we are supporting police to tackle serious crime. It is not enough just to have the laws; we also have to support our police to act on those laws. This government and this Minister for Police have absolutely backed our force to the hilt. We are the government that in our last term introduced stab-proof vests. We are the government that introduced a workers compensation scheme for sworn officers that had never existed before and we are the government that is running the largest recruitment campaign for police officers in the history of Western Australia. I know that all sorts of comments have been made about morale in the force. I do not think that those comments from the opposition are based on any real-life intelligence. They may get the occasional email from someone who is disgruntled, but I do not believe that those members have spoken to police officers en masse to find out their views about this. I can tell members that I know that the police minister has. Between all of his work, both in this place and in his ministerial capacity, he has been travelling all over the state visiting police stations and police districts. He visited Cockburn police district with me and my friend the member for Jandakot just before the Christmas break. I was very impressed by the police minister because he stayed and made himself available to the police officers on duty at that station for probably an hour to answer questions. Given that the Western Australian Police Union is engaged in negotiations with the government at the moment, at times the debate was robust, as one would expect it to be.

Mr P. Papalia: That was the only time in more than the 100 stations that I have been to that it was like that. It must be you, mate!

Mr D.A.E. SCAIFE: Yes, or the member for Jandakot! I did say that as a former union delegate, I am always willing to see a bit of debate, but the point is that that is to be expected. That happens under any government at any workplace when enterprise bargaining agreement negotiations are going on. The police minister spoke at length with those officers about their concerns, and he had the answers on everything as well. I can tell members now that even though the debate was robust, the overwhelming sentiment from Cockburn police is how proud they are of the job that they do and what a good job they do. As a local member, I am grateful that they do their job. They also give the government credit for the fact that it is working furiously to recruit more police officers and for putting in place these protections for officers that I just outlined. That is the bit that the opposition does not get. Its members neglect the fact that in

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talking about crime, they are constantly talking down police officers and the work that they do. That is not consistent with the view that police officers have of themselves or of the type of leadership that they want to see in government. If members opposite want to be the government, they are going to have to sharpen their tools, because this government is clearly rising to the challenges before it and we have a minister who is very much dedicated to improving safety in our communities. I will certainly back him and this government any day of the week.

MS J.L. HANNS (Collie—Preston — Parliamentary Secretary) [6.33 pm]: I rise to make a very small contribution to this debate today. I want to place firmly on record my complete and utter disgust with the opposition's motion today. I would like to give some very clear examples of how well this government is tackling crime within Western Australia. I want to pick up on the comments made previously by Minister Winton in her community services portfolio. She issued a word of warning to the opposition around the fact that to reflect on kids and their communities in a negative way is a really dangerous position for the opposition to take. I am going to give members the perfect example of where this really does not do communities any justice.

When I first moved to Collie about 17 years ago, I was working at the high school in my first year when, really sadly, a young year 11 student was murdered by two other students at the school. I would like to still send my condolences to the family of this young person—I will not name them today. It was an incredibly traumatic time for the staff, school students, and, obviously, parents of not only the victim, but also the children who committed the crime, because those families also suffered. The most compelling thing to happen in that community at the time was that all those young people were painted in the light of young people in Collie being murderers and not fit to be respected as young people doing really positive things in that community. That really shook the whole community to the core. The media descended on Collie because it was a big news story on that night's news, and maybe for the next couple of nights, and then they all disappeared and moved on to the next headline. But the community of Collie could not move on. There were ramifications right across the community. Young people in Collie rallied because they were being painted as criminals. Yes, this terrible thing had happened, but that was not what the community or its young people were about.

The young student was studying ATAR history at that point in time and her classmates, who had lost their class member under tragic circumstances, decided to pay tribute to and honour her memory and make the point that young people in Collie were not what the media or parts of the government—or the opposition in this case—may have said was going wrong in Collie at that point in time. As a community, they decided to fundraise and send a large number of those students who were in that class at the time to Gallipoli and the Western Front sites to commemorate Anzac Day. Those young people decided that they wanted to show that they were worthy citizens of their community and that the community of Collie was not riddled with crime, despite the media wanting everybody to believe that that was the case.

My word of caution to opposition members is that when they start painting communities in a negative light, the people in those communities really feel that and suffer from it. I would like to reiterate Minister Winton's caution to the opposition around doing that in this particular case. We all know that the communities that experience crime often do so as a result of things like alcohol, which we have discussed at length during question time since returning to Parliament this year, family and domestic violence, the breakdown of families and the inability for those families to have a wider support network to call on during particularly troubled times. I speak from experience, having taught in schools for nearly 30 years, when I say that sometimes those young people are doing it tough because their families are doing it tough. The thing that really irks me about the opposition's reference to all these things is that it continuously raises the fact that Aboriginal young people and Aboriginal families are over-represented. We appreciate that, but there are some really complex problems that programs like Target 120 are trying to actually address. The member for Cockburn mentioned how complicated, layered and nuanced the approaches to solve those things are and how difficult it is. This government, through the Target 120 program, is trying to work with those families, whether they be Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal families, to get them to gain trust in government, because, I guess, in the example of Aboriginal people, they have not necessarily trusted governments over the last 200 and something years in Australia, and rightly so.

It is absolutely about building relationships with people in those communities, and that takes a long time—to gain people's trust, to appreciate people's circumstances and to work out some people's family circumstances so that they can be in a position to accept the assistance and support that is being offered. As the member for Cockburn said, that is not something that can be solved with a magic wand; it takes time and commitment, and it takes people to back those communities. Without doing that, there is constant criticism of communities across Western Australia that are doing it tough with crime, undermining the confidence of people living in those communities and the people who are working in police services, in the social work sector and in the hospitals to support all the things happening in those communities.

I urge the opposition to listen to the reflections of the minister today and really take them on board. It should work with the government and not criticise us because we are doing more than it ever did when it was in government.

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MR P. PAPALIA (Warnbro — Minister for Police) [6.40 pm]: I thank members for their very thoughtful and valuable contributions, particularly those on our side, most recently the member for Collie–Preston. I learnt a few things this evening from the contributions made by members from the other side. They said nothing relevant to crime and crucial services in the community, of course. Nevertheless, I learnt a few things. Principally, I think the new Leader of the Opposition is going to struggle. I timed the member’s speech. I think he spoke for 29 minutes. As lead speaker, he had 60 minutes in which to speak. He had a big opportunity to come in here swinging and tear the government apart and expose failure. He lasted for 29 minutes, and I think 20 minutes of his speech was repetitive. That is a little concerning for the future and does not augur well.

I also learnt that the Leader of the Opposition does not like to take interjections. I think that reflects a fear of being exposed for his incapacity to respond while he is on his feet. The reason I was trying to interject on the member for Moore and to make a contribution was not to ridicule what he was saying but to point out that he had made an error. He claimed in this place during the first part of his speech that yesterday I said that the cashless debit card had not worked in Laverton because of money or something; I cannot recall the exact words. He did not repeat what I said. I pointed out that the people who are coming from the lands into Laverton and indulging in harmful use of alcohol and causing a lot of the problems that have been complained about by shire president Hill were not subject to the CDC—the card that all the debate was about in Laverton. The federal opposition flew its leader from Canberra all the way to Laverton to talk about the removal of income management, and those people had not been subject to that card. I pointed that out yesterday by quoting shire president Hill from 2019 when Hon Peter Dutton was a member of the federal government of the day. He was saying almost identical things to complaints now about the behaviour of people with regard to alcohol that he was saying then, except the card was in play. It was not applicable to those people but the comments were identical. I pointed out that obviously the problem is not related to that. It is a serious issue and an extensive one that has been going for a long time, and it is unchanged with respect to the card. I am not saying whether that card works. It was an interesting ploy or act by Hon Peter Dutton to go to Laverton.

We learnt another thing from the opposition’s contribution. I am not sure whether the Leader of the Liberal Party has been to Laverton. Having stood in this place and criticised the Prime Minister of Australia for coming to Western Australia nine times since he became Prime Minister and travelling to the regions, including Kalgoorlie and Port Hedland and, for the first time in history, taking cabinet to a regional town and sitting in a tower watching all the wealth-generating activity, the Leader of the Liberal Party in Western Australia came in here and attacked Prime Minister Albanese. I suspect that she has never been to Laverton. She was asking, “Why didn’t he go to Laverton?” We might well pose exactly the same question to the Leader of the Liberal Party. I have been to Laverton lots of times but I have also been there as police minister, most recently on 11 September last year, I think. I met the officer in charge of the police station and talked about the challenges that they confront. I have been to Leonora and done the same thing. When I get the opportunity, I constantly visit police in not only the regions, but also the metropolitan area, seeking their advice. It was really interesting to have witnessed the Leader of the Liberal Party’s formulaic attack on the Prime Minister that had been run by the federal Liberal Party across the country. Maybe the member has been to Laverton, but it did not seem like it when I asked her the question, and that is pretty embarrassing.

Other things were revealed in contributions from members on the other side. The member for Cottesloe made a claim about what I said about statistics. I do not talk about stats. I do not like them because invariably crime stats have a natural tendency to go up as the population increases. It is not something that I particularly talk about. With respect to Carnarvon, I did say that the police reports that I receive and the comments from police do not support the member’s claims. Claims were made in this place and elsewhere about Carnarvon. I talk regularly to senior police officers and police officers on the ground. In particular, I sought advice from the assistant commissioner for the regions, who is the most senior police officer responsible for all the regions in Western Australia—Darryl Gaunt. He is a great guy. He is a very good police officer. He is incredibly experienced. Member for Cottesloe, I am talking about you, in particular, so you might want to listen to this. Assistant Commissioner Darryl Gaunt probably has more experience in the regions than just about most people in Western Australia. I asked him about the specific claim that crime is out of control in Carnarvon. He provided me with a response. He said there is crime in all parts of the state. That is historical. It is about people. With people in communities across the nation and around the world, there is crime. He said there has not been any extraordinary flare-up in crime. That is what I was saying to the member. It was not borne out by the advice that I received from the police. The member might be interested to know that in my office last week, I met with the member for North West Central, Assistant Commissioner Gaunt and Commander Rod Wilde, the commander of region south, which covers that area. We talked to the member about the challenges that she believes confront the community. I am pretty disappointed with the member for Cottesloe’s claims that we are bullying or the inference that some sort of misogyny is going on with respect to the member for North West Central. We spoke politely in my office about the issues.

Dr D.J. Honey: I didn’t say “misogyny”; I said “bullying”.

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Mr P. PAPALIA: The member said it was bullying. It is not bullying to say publicly that alcohol is the cause of a lot of issues in Carnarvon and that some people who are complaining loudly about that are the ones delivering alcohol to the community. That is the truth. That is not bullying. With respect to the member for North West Central, I had Assistant Commissioner Gaunt and Commander Wilde in the office sitting with her to talk about the issues.

I will say this, and I have said the same thing in here before: since I have been Minister for Police, I have been to Carnarvon four times—three times in the first 12 months, and once in January this year. When I went there most recently, I sought advice from the local police about their concerns about the challenges they are confronting and how they might be addressed. They told me two things that they would most benefit from. The first was the destocking of glass. I note there was a claim in the media today by one of the people in Carnarvon who sells alcohol that they have destocked. That is not true. The police said to me that the destocking of glass was necessary. If we drive around town, we see locations where there is, unfortunately, harmful use of alcohol going on in great quantities, and there is broken glass everywhere. That was the first thing the police asked for. Just about all the alcohol that is sold to people in takeaway glass bottles can be sold in cans, so that is a pretty simple thing. They are saying that to me because they want the liquor accord, which did not really get together until last week, to voluntarily destock glass.

That was the first thing. I turn now to the second thing the police asked for. The member for Cottesloe, with his vast experience of the regions and the challenges confronting people, ranted in this place about how alcohol is not a major driver of crime.

Dr D.J. Honey: I didn't say that; I said your ban won't stop it coming into the regions.

Mr P. PAPALIA: He said restrictions—not bans—would not have an impact. That is what he said. He said we would be dreaming if we thought that.

I talk to the police when I go to these places. In Carnarvon, as I said earlier today, the police said that they are enabled to put in place limited alcohol restrictions and shut takeaway liquor stores under the Liquor Control Act, which gives them the opportunity to do so in response to things like funerals or concerns about impending trouble in the event that there are large amounts of alcohol available. They say that every time they do that, there is a substantial drop in crime and in presentations at the hospital. There is a direct correlation between a reduction in alcohol and the damage that is being done in the community that police have to deal with. It is not just me saying that, but for the member for Cottesloe to suggest that he has some greater knowledge is just laughable.

Dr D.J. Honey interjected.

Mr P. PAPALIA: How many times has the member been to Fitzroy Crossing?

Dr D.J. Honey: Five times in six years.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I have been going there since I was elected in 2007. Does the member know what happened in 2007? June Oscar and Emily Carter campaigned for restrictions of takeaway full-strength alcohol in Fitzroy Crossing and Halls Creek. Does the member know what happened? There was a dramatic reduction in crime and attendance at schools increased. At that time there were Royal Flying Doctor Service flights from Fitzroy Crossing to Broome at least twice a month, taking people to hospital. That changed overnight.

The member made the suggestion that there were piles of alcohol; I think he may be exaggerating a little. I have been there, and I was there at the time the member was talking about. It is true that there is sly grogging. When I was Minister for Racing and Gaming in the last government, we amended the Liquor Control Act to give police greater powers to intercept sly grogging. There have been floods recently, and before that we had COVID; the Kimberley was cut into four and it was very difficult to get around, so it is difficult to see whether it is still happening, but prior to that, I was concerned that there was sly grogging that was having an impact on the communities that had voluntarily gone dry as a result of powerful arguments by strong women. I think, over time, the impact of that has diminished as a consequence of sly grogging. We have to focus on that. It is undeniable that the harmful use of alcohol is a key element; it is easily the biggest thing. It results in children being brain damaged at birth and high rates of foetal alcohol spectrum disorder. It is incredible that the member would question that; I do not know why he has.

That aside, I can tell members that since the end of the major impact of COVID at the start of last year, every jurisdiction in Australia and just about every modern jurisdiction around the world has experienced an escalation in family and domestic violence and assaults. I do not think that is unrelated to the fact that we have gone through a pandemic and that there is extraordinary anxiety, with all the attendant consequences of that on people's health. It doubtless has something to do with the harmful use of alcohol and other drugs, but all of that is true, and we are responding to it. We are responding to community safety and we are growing the police force by the biggest numbers in the history of this state. There will be 15 per cent growth.

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We are recruiting police from overseas, but not because no-one in Western Australia wants to volunteer. It is actually offensive when members opposite say that. When members of the Liberal Party and the Nationals WA say that Western Australians do not want to be police officers, it is offensive. I can tell members right now that there are 180 recruits at the academy who have all stepped up. I am going to a graduation ceremony tomorrow night. These good, young people—they are all young to me; some of them are a bit older, but they are all still young compared with me!—are stepping forward and volunteering for service before self in the interests of the state, and they are doing so in huge numbers. Over the last two years, we have recruited and graduated bigger numbers of police officers than ever before in WA history, and that is going to continue. Thousands of people are continuing to express interest in joining the Western Australia Police Force.

The year before last year, before there was any attrition story, I asked the police to prepare a plan to recruit overseas and interstate because I could see on the horizon lower and lower unemployment rates in Western Australia and greater and greater employment opportunities, and I could see that there would be a need to seek further pastures with regard to recruiting. That is not in response to last year; that was in advance of last year. I am not desperately going to the UK; I am going anywhere we need to go to help the police with the resources, numbers and capabilities they need. We will deliver on recruiting people, and the officers who come from the UK and Ireland will have a minimum of three years' experience. They will not be coming in with the same need for training; they will have an 18-week course, and then they will be out there supporting people.

That is a good thing, not a bad thing. The member for Cockburn indicated earlier that we are very focused on organised criminals—the ones bringing illicit drugs into this state, predominantly meth, which does an extraordinary amount of damage and finds its way out into regional communities. We can disrupt that if we give greater, very targeted powers to the police, and we are doing that in a range of areas. We are going to make the community safer by rewriting the Firearms Act and imposing a more responsible regime on firearms in Western Australia, elevating community safety as a number one priority. That is not the case currently. The Minister for Racing and Gaming introduced the protected entertainment precincts bill; that is providing additional safety for people, and we are resourcing and supporting our police like never before.

It is kind of laughable to suggest that the police minister could in any way have too much of an impact on morale at a unit level. The people who drive our morale are hurt and damaged by the criticism of members of the Liberal Party and National Party. When they say morale is low, they are actually saying that the officers in charge of police stations are not doing their job. They are actually saying that the leaders of units in the Western Australia Police Force are not good leaders. That is not true. We have the best police force in the world, with some fantastic individuals. That applies particularly to some of those in leadership roles, from the top all the way down to the sergeants and senior constables. They are doing an extraordinary job and are world class.

I wish the opposition would stop this pathetic attempt to try to somehow attack us by attacking the police. It is not fair, and it is not right. Beyond that, we did not learn very much. I am very disappointed that opposition members would seek to perpetuate fearmongering and the like. They are a bit dysfunctional.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.

House adjourned at 7.00 pm
