

POLICE — DISTRICTS

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

- (1) Can the minister update the house on how the McGowan Labor government's decision to expand the number of policing districts is providing support for our police officers, driving down crime and helping make our communities safer?

Several members interjected.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Have you got a problem, "Struggle Street"?

Several members interjected.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I will continue.

- (2) And can the minister outline for the house what this —

The SPEAKER: Member, just read the question; do not interject.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Do you want me to start again?

The SPEAKER: Yes.

Dr A.D. BUTI: My question is —

- (1) Can the minister update the house on how the McGowan Labor government's decision to expand the number of policing districts is providing better support for our police officers, driving down crime and helping make our communities safer?
- (2) Can the minister outline to the house how this compares with the way communities such as Armadale were treated under the previous Liberal–National government's failed and ineffective policing model?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS replied:

I thank the member for Armadale for his excellent question and for his support of his community.

- (1)–(2) The fact of the matter is that a seven-district metropolitan operating model for police existed in this state for many decades. One of those districts struggled more than most—it was the largest and the busiest—and that was Cannington. If anything, the obvious thing that always stood out was that that district needed to be broken into two. Unfortunately, under the leadership of the member for Scarborough a couple of years before the Liberal Party lost government, the last government had this bright idea to break the metropolitan policing district into just four. That saw West Perth and Ellenbrook in the same district, Victoria Park and Byford in the same district, and Cottesloe and Butler in the same policing district. It was a nonsense and did not work. We saw massive blowouts in crime, response times get worse, and a very unhappy workforce with the Western Australian Police Union continually complaining about the treatment of officers, the shifts they were working, the distances they were travelling and officers being frustrated at having to continually arrive at jobs later than they would have liked. Fortunately, under the leadership of Commissioner Dawson, about a year ago—we supported Commissioner Dawson in this—we broke it back down into eight policing districts. As part of that, we effectively reinstated many of the previous districts. But in what used to be the Cannington district, which was a huge district, we have now broken it into two. Member for Armadale, there is now a policing district based in Armadale and that has been paying dividends; in fact, it has been paying dividends in terms of crime right across the metropolitan area. Crime is down across the board by seven per cent compared with what it was under the last year of the Barnett–Harvey government. In Armadale, the results are very pleasing: crime has decreased by five per cent and crimes against the person have gone down by 12 per cent.

Mrs L.M. Harvey interjected.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I hear the member for Scarborough laughing. What we were seeing in the south-east district was a huge blowout in crime—a double-digit increase in crime—so why laugh when I am saying that there has been a 12 per cent decrease in crimes against the person in Armadale compared with a couple of years ago? That is not a laughing matter; it is a positive move in the right direction—a very different direction from the direction the member for Scarborough was taking the police force. I am pleased with that. Does that mean that there is now no crime in Armadale? Of course it does not; it means that we are heading in the right direction. Not only that, the member for Armadale asked me —

Mrs L.M. Harvey interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Scarborough.

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Armadale.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The member for Scarborough should perhaps keep quiet and think about her own embarrassment.

Since coming to government we have introduced a 24/7 police station at Armadale, something that the member for Armadale's community asked for; we have targeted operations dealing with retail theft in the Armadale commercial area; increased visibility at train stations; police have engaged in more curfew checks; there has been participation in the Armadale Youth Intervention Partnership, involving children from local schools; and, as the member knows, shortly we will be delivering the new Armadale Courthouse and Police Complex, which will be a huge boon for the member for Armadale's area. I expect that that will mean even better results for the member's district.

Mrs L.M. Harvey: That was a fantastic commitment from the Barnett–Harvey government.

The SPEAKER: Member for Scarborough, I call you to order for the first time.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I am surprised that the member for Scarborough pops up her head up over this —

Mrs L.M. Harvey interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Scarborough.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: — because for month after month after month we were seeing double-digit increases in crime, huge metro districts, and police officers running from one end of the metropolitan area to the other. Now local police forces are looking after local people and responding locally to crime. They are in there in the shopping centres and dealing with the local schools; they are not chasing from one end of the metropolitan area to the other. The member for Scarborough and others should just get behind the new commissioner and support our police for a change.