

POLICE — RECRUITMENT

615. Ms M.M. QUIRK to the Minister for Police:

I refer to the McGowan government's unprecedented commitment to increase the Western Australia Police Force by an additional 950 police officers in its term of government. Can the minister update the house on the initiatives being undertaken to recruit those additional police officers, particularly considering the current economic pressures facing the country, and can the minister advise the house of the work the state government has done to enable the recruitment of police officers from other jurisdictions?

Mr P. PAPALIA replied:

I thank the member for her question because it gives me an opportunity to reiterate and expand on what is being done to recruit police officers.

I note that we have the best economy in the country and probably among the best, if not the best, in the world. We are confronting a challenge, as are all sectors, in continuing to tap the population of Western Australia and attract people to the police force. There is no immediate difficulty with that. We are attracting people, but we anticipate that we will have to continue other efforts in light of the extraordinary economy we are confronting. We recently announced an overseas expansion of the campaign. Last weekend, 5 000 people attended the jobs expo at the police academy. As I said earlier, 120 new applications were received for the police within three days of that expo.

The WA Police Force is now going to be recruiting from the United Kingdom, Ireland and New Zealand. That was made possible with the collaboration of the new federal government. We have been working on this for months, which is why we are the only jurisdiction in a position to approach fully qualified police officers in those countries. This historic agreement is the first of its kind at this time and will enable WA to recommence recruiting overseas officers. Under the new labour agreement, skilled police officers from the UK and Ireland will be given entry into WA over the next five years under the employer nomination scheme subclass 186 visa that will enable their transition into the WA Police Force and place them on a pathway to citizenship. The previous labour agreement that allowed WA to recruit officers from the UK expired in 2019.

I repeat that the Western Australia Police Force is more than 480 members stronger than it was when we took office. The Western Australia Police Force is far and away larger than it has ever been, and we are continuing to graduate officers. Next week I will attend the twelfth police academy graduation since I became the minister in only March last year. That is an extraordinary number. At most graduations, more than 50 officers graduate, and that will continue. Next week we will go to another graduation. There will be one almost every month. We are continuing to recruit officers locally.

Recently, we have undertaken cadet programs that are focused on attracting young people who might not be old enough to become a police officer. That mentoring program allows them to experience the job of a police officer at a police station and guides them towards applying to become a recruit. That has focused very much recently on Aboriginal cadets and culturally and linguistically diverse cadets. A story that was distorted by some commentators recently was that we had opened up that program to the wider community again. This has been going on since our current commissioner and many other commissioners were young officers who joined the police force. The cadet program has been around for many, many decades. It is another avenue for attracting young people and getting them to consider joining the police force and supporting them on their pathway to becoming a recruit. We will continue to do that. The police are fully resourced to grow the force by 950 over the rate of attrition in this term of government. I am confident that the police will make every possible effort to achieve that, and I am pretty confident that we will get there.