

POLICE NUMBERS

736. Mr P.D. OMODEI to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services:

I refer to the minister's rant in reply to my question last week about the massive police shortage.

- (1) Will the minister apologise to Western Australia Police for trying to cover up the massive police shortages and, subsequently, understating the effort that the police on the street are making to cover that shortfall?
- (2) Will he now apologise to the people of Western Australia for blatantly misleading them about police shortages and the rise in violent crime under his government?
- (3) If not, is he accusing the WA Police Union of lying to the people of Western Australia?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE replied:

I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his dorothy dixer.

- (1)-(3) We note from the question that he made allegations and again gave no substance whatsoever to support them, and he suggested that I was covering up and misleading with numbers. I have done nothing of the sort. Last week the Leader of the Opposition suggested that many more than 30 officers were retiring or resigning each month. When I pointed out to him that that was simply not true and that he had made a false claim, he said that he had been told that by the secretary of the police union. I spoke to Mike Dean, the secretary of the police union, and he indicated to me that he had said no such thing. Again, the Leader of the Opposition has been caught out.

Mr P.D. Omodei: Ask the journalists what Mike Dean and his police officers said.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I did not; I asked Mike Dean. He did not say that there were more than 30 resignations.

Mr P.D. Omodei: You've been caught out. You know there's a shortage of police officers and you know it's putting police officers under stress and is placing the community at risk.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: This is putting the Leader of the Opposition under a lot of stress and he does not cope very well. He is at risk; the knives are being sharpened.

Mr J.A. McGinty: By whom?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: Obviously, he can hear the knives being sharpened by the member next to him. The Leader of the Opposition is under pressure and he is saying things that are not true. When he is caught out, unfortunately, he is not man enough to correct the record. He simply does not have the intestinal fortitude to get up and correct the record when he makes a mistake. It was interesting that the Leader of the Opposition issued a press release on Friday, 23 November in which he referred to Kobelke's deceit. Again, there was no substance in the press release to correct anything that I had said.

Mr P.D. Omodei: It came directly from the police union in writing.

The SPEAKER: Order, Leader of the Opposition!

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: The Leader of the Opposition attached to his media statement an email from Peter Kelly, who works for the WA Police Union - not from Mike Dean but from Peter Kelly. That email contains references to deceptive figures etc.

Mr P.D. Omodei: Does it?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: Yes, but it goes on to refer to such things as the headcount that counts every officer as a head even though a large number are on leave without pay. I point out to the house that the number of officers on leave without pay has fallen every year for the past four years. In 2003-04 the number was 62 full-time equivalents; in 2004-05 it was 46 FTEs; in 2005-06 it was 43 FTEs; and in 2006-07 it was down to 39 FTEs. If the argument is that there are fewer police because many are on leave without pay, and the number of officers on leave without pay has been falling every year, there is no argument of fewer police. The Leader of the Opposition has relied on an email that gave him partial information. He has said that it somehow suggests that there are more than 30 resignations every month. That is factually not true. The Leader of the Opposition is a very desperate man, who has been caught out saying things in this place that are not true. He simply does not have the courage to stand and correct his false statements.