

POLICE — SWORN OFFICERS

542. Dr D.J. HONEY to the Minister for Police:

I note the government's 2020–21 budget commitment to deliver an additional 950 frontline police officers above attrition and the tendency of this government to fail to deliver on commitments.

- (1) As of today, what is the total number of authorised police officers?
- (2) How many of those additional 950 sworn officers above attrition are on the beat and in service today?

Mr P. PAPALIA replied:

- (1)–(2) I have no idea what the number of authorised police officers is today. I can tell the member that the last time I heard, which was about a month ago, there were 561 more officers today than there were when he was in office. That is actual FTEs. That is not authorised officers; that is actual police officers on the ground. I can also tell the house that in the last two years since the announcement was made that we were intending to grow the police force by more than 950 police officers above attrition, 1 000 police officers have been recruited. Eight hundred of them have graduated from the academy and, as we speak, 200 are doing training at the academy. We are recruiting more all the time. There is a comprehensive plan. What the government does is fund the commitment, and it has been funded, and the police then deliver on it.

I do not know why members of the Liberal Party continue to criticise the police commissioner and the Western Australia Police Force. I do not think they like the police. The only assumption I can arrive at as a consequence of the type of questions they ask is that they do not think very much of the Western Australia Police Force. On the other hand, I do. I think it is doing a wonderful job. Western Australia has an unemployment rate of 3.1 per cent. It is the lowest in the nation by far. Every other jurisdiction is going the other way. The national unemployment rate is growing. In Western Australia, we have the highest participation rate in the history of the state and we have a 3.1 per cent unemployment rate. It is not surprising that people who have possibly done 10 years in the police force and have a small long service leave lump sum behind them are trying different things and having a look around. There is more opportunity in Western Australia than in probably any place on the planet at the moment. It is not surprising, therefore, that police officers, like everybody else—everyone is confronting the same challenge—are looking to try something else. I would rather they did not. I think that a lot of them will come back once they realise that the grass is not that green on the other side of the fence. But I can say that we have recruited 1 000 police officers in the last two years—800 of them have graduated and 200 are at the academy. If the shadow police minister bothered coming to a graduation, he would be able to meet some of those officers and, like me, be impressed by the quality of the people who are graduating from the academy.