

CRIME RATES — KIMBERLEY

Statement

HON NEIL THOMSON (Mining and Pastoral) [9.46 pm]: I would like to raise a couple of things very quickly. One is about Hon Alannah MacTiernan's comment about Northern Minerals, which I am happy to take offline. However, I think that her comment about Northern Minerals might not be entirely accurate because I understand that as recently as 23 February, the project was ongoing and the pilot project was still underway. I am happy to take the matter offline, but I wanted to make that comment without interjecting, obviously, out of respect for her. However, I needed to make that clarification.

Today, I also provide a little clarification about some of the discourse around crime matters in the Kimberley. There has been a considerable amount of discussion about crime in the Kimberley in recent times and I welcome that discussion. Without doubt I think that there has been an increased focus on crime. However, the important thing, as we move forward, is not to get overly self-congratulatory about the outcomes of any effort in the very most recent times of the increasing policing effort. I refer specifically to a comment made in the other place today by the Minister for Police in response to a question put by my colleague Divina D'Anna, the member for Kimberley, about the most recent data. I have said in this place that December had the worst crime data in the Kimberley ever on record for almost every class of crime. There probably were a few exceptions, including a vehicle theft, which occurred in September; that was the highest month. It was not exactly a point, I suppose, that the government would want to commend itself for. The government says that there has been a 16 per cent reduction in crime as a result of increasing policing effort, but I need to point out that this is quite normal in January. In fact, the January data is yet to be published online in a public sense. Obviously, the government has that data. If we extrapolate that data for a normal January, this would still be the highest crime rate on record for January. I look forward to that data being presented. But it is important not to get carried away with a reduction in the rate because seasonality is a key point. I raise this because I still contend that the Minister for Police waited too long before deploying additional police to that place.

A government member interjected.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: I still contend that the Minister for Police should not have authorised—whether or not he had the power to—the removal of the canine unit from that town.

A government member interjected.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: I note that the Minister for Police has suddenly become a convert to the usefulness of canine units, which is very good. We saw considerable community pressure and objection to the loss —

A government member interjected.

Point of Order

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: I do not mind a bit of interjection, but the consistency of it needs to be addressed, in my view. By all means, make the odd comment, but the constant running commentary is both unparliamentary and unhelpful.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Leader of the Opposition has called a point of order. There is some interjection and I invite members to allow the member on his feet to continue for the following five minutes. I take the Leader of the Opposition's point, although there is no point of order.

Debate Resumed

Hon NEIL THOMSON: I thank the President.

My point is that we are now seeing the canine unit going to the Kimberley. I hope that it stays in the Kimberley. I think it is important that we do not have fly-in fly-out arrangements for these units. Additional resources are also important, and I noted and watched with interest the minister's response on this. He talked a lot about Broome. I reinforce the fact that this is a problem throughout the Kimberley; it is not just an issue for Broome. I know Broome is often the port of call for many of our ministers who go to that nice town—my home—but it goes beyond Broome. We must deal with this issue across the Kimberley.

I am pleased that there is greater attention on this. I also want to clarify a comment made on ABC 720 on 14 February. We heard the minister comment that he had written to the Minister for Communications, Urban Infrastructure, Cities and the Arts about the impact of social media on crime in the Kimberley. The comment implied that the minister for communications was somehow to blame and that the federal government needed to act. It is very clear—there is a memorandum of understanding between the state and federal governments—that law enforcement issues

are raised with the federal government and it then provides advice and support through the Office of the eSafety Commissioner, I believe it is.

It is very clear from the response to my question on 16 February that the minister had not actually written to the federal minister until 4 February. This issue has been going on for over a year. I just want to make it very clear and I am very pleased that the Premier has intervened and dealt with this issue. The Premier had to intervene to put some focus into the police minister's actions.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon NEIL THOMSON: I hope that the Premier keeps a very close eye on the performance of the minister and ensures that, over the coming months, we see a genuine change in the data, seasonally adjusted. We should not focus on just the headline reduction; we should we look at a seasonal adjustment of the data and see a genuine improvement for the good people of the Kimberley.

House adjourned at 9.55 pm
