

POLICE — MORALE

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

I have a supplementary question. Is the minister denying that low morale in the police force is a significant contributor to the record resignations from the force?

Mr P. PAPALIA replied:

I reflect on the case in the northern suburbs that I referred to. That is an alleged murder; it is still before the courts. I misspoke earlier. The police found a suspect very rapidly.

I wish to address this matter of resignations because I have an important point to make. There are more police officers now than ever before by a long way. During the opposition's last term in office, when it was responsible for recruiting police officers, the Western Australia Police Force recruited 1 306 officers between 2012 and 2016 and there were 1 211 resignations. That was a net increase of 95 officers under its last five years in office. Under our five years in office, we recruited in the order of 1 800 officers between 2017 and 2022. On 28 February, when we pretty much took office, the headcount was 6 416. At the end of September, it was 6 897. That is a net growth of 481 officers. There are 481 more officers than when we started. Not only that, there are currently 155 officers at the academy. I will be going to another graduation next week when another 50-plus officers will be graduating. There was a jobs expo at the weekend. Since it occurred, it attracted 150-plus applications from Western Australians.

As members saw, many months ago we commenced negotiations to ensure that Western Australia was the first jurisdiction in the country to have a labour agreement that enables us to advertise in New Zealand, Ireland and the United Kingdom for qualified police officers who will require only a transition course, which is half the length —

Dr D.J. Honey: You'll need it because numbers are going down.

Mr P. PAPALIA: So the member understands it, there are 481 more officers today than when we took office.

Dr D.J. Honey: And the numbers are going down.

Mr P. PAPALIA: It is going that way; going down is that way and going up is that way!

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr P. PAPALIA: A total of 1 800 officers have been recruited and there are 150-plus at the academy. There will be another graduation next week. We are taking action to continue to recruit locally, but we have the best economy in the world, probably. I would prefer to have that challenge. We have set our bar very high. It is not set at 95 net growth in five years that members opposite set. We have set 10 times that because we want to do the right thing by the Western Australian community and grow our police force by a record number—15 per cent over our term of government. I reckon we will get there. We have the funding. The police force has the resources. Police are out there campaigning in every possible way. There is only one negative element in this whole scenario; it is the member going out there and criticising the Western Australia Police Force and telling people it is not a good job.

Dr D.J. Honey interjected.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I refuse to accept that claim. I respect and admire people who serve in uniform and make sacrifices on behalf of the community. I have a little bit of experience in it. I think being in the Western Australia Police Force is a great job. We are attracting great people. I wish the member would stop being so negative about it.

The SPEAKER: Members, that concludes question time.