

QUESTION ON MANDATORY SENTENCING — ASSAULTS AGAINST POLICE OFFICERS

658. Dr M.D. NAHAN to the Minister for Police:

Last week in this house, several members of the Labor Party voiced their opposition to mandatory sentencing during debate on the manufacture of illegal drugs and the potential that this activity might expose or cause harm to children. Given that it has been two years since the introduction of mandatory sentencing legislation for people who assault police officers, can the minister outline to the house the impact of these laws?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON replied: I thank the member for the question. Last week, the members for Armadale, Rockingham, Warnbro and Victoria Park all voiced their opposition to mandatory sentencing. The member for Victoria Park went so far as to say that the policy was arrogant and absurd.

Mr B.S. Wyatt: No; it was you I called arrogant and absurd.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: No, it was not. The member should read the *Hansard*. It was the policy. That is what he said. I inform members that last Thursday marked the two-year anniversary since the Liberal–National government moved to protect our police officers by introducing mandatory sentencing for anyone who assaults our police offices and causes bodily harm.

Mr P.T. Miles: A good policy!

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I thank the member; it is a good policy. I inform the house that, since introduction of these laws, assaults against police officers have dropped by 37 per cent. That represents 500 offences. Just for members opposite, because I know they love graphs—my colleague showed them one this morning—this graph shows what has happened since the Liberal–National government introduced mandatory sentencing for those people who assault our police officers.

The graph explains that in the 12-month period September 2008 to August 2009, before the introduction of mandatory sentencing, there were 1 346 offences committed against police officers. Following the introduction of the new laws, assaults dropped by 28 per cent to 974 assault offences against police officers in the first year. There has been an additional drop of 13 per cent in the second year of the laws to 849, bringing the total decrease over two years to 37 per cent. The introduction of these laws has certainly given great comfort to thousands of our police officers who, every day —

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Warnbro, the longer I am on my feet, the fewer questions will be asked. I formally call you to order for the second time today.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: This graph tells a very good story of the fact that by having mandatory sentencing, those people who inflict bodily harm against our police officers will go to jail. That is very similar to the —

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: We know the member's views. That is very similar —

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Armadale, I formally call you to order for the third time today.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: In conclusion, I want to say that it certainly works. People will think twice about assaulting our police officers and causing them bodily harm. I certainly believe that the laws we introduced and passed in this house that applied mandatory sentencing to those people who put children in situations of danger, including people operating illicit drug labs and people actually causing bodily harm to children by illicit drug labs, will have an effect. It is certainly designed to protect our children.

It is unfortunate that the Labor Party do not support those laws that were brought in to protect our police officers and, indeed, were brought in to protect our children.