

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

### WRITTEN QUESTION

Mrs Finocchiaro to the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services:

#### **School Based Constables**

- 1. Have the school based police constables been eliminated in the Territory and, if so, what was the rationale behind that decision?**

I refer you to my answer to your question on this matter in the House on 11 May 2017. In my answer, I explained that the decision to change the arrangements relating to school based constables occurred on 1 August 2016 before the election of the ALP Government. In short, the changes were made under the previous CLP Government, of which you were a member. Please see the attached copy of Hansard for 11 May 2017.

- 2. If school based police constables have been eliminated from schools in the Territory, what programs or procedures have been put in place to compensate for the important services that those constables provided to schools and students?**

Police officers have not been eliminated from the schools; however, in the Darwin area, the police officers who were assigned to school locations are now given broader responsibility through engagement in the wider-community. These officers continue to provide important presentations around issues such as bullying, personal safety, cyber safety, sexting, social media, law and the police within schools across the Greater Darwin area.

Written advice was sent to Darwin schools in late January 2017, outlining the changes and advising that police would continue to provide the services of safety presentations and event participation; however, officers would no longer be allocated to a school. Police should form part of a service of complimentary measures to the Department of Education and not be relied upon as a primary provider. Schools can continue to request police services to assist through email for a planned event or by calling the Police Assistance Line on 131 444 in cases where offences have been or may be committed.

3. **If school based police constables are still in place in any schools across the Territory, how many are there and what schools are they assigned to?**

Although police constables are not assigned specifically to school based activities only, officers are assigned specific schools/clusters to give ownership and consistency in the services offered to the schools in the Darwin and Alice Springs areas. The Northern Operations Division has 16 Community Engagement Police Officers (CEPOs) and Alice Springs has four. Katherine also employs CEPOs, a constable and an Aboriginal community police officer, and Tennant Creek has a constable.

QUESTIONS – Thursday 11 May 2017

**School-Based Constables**

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO to CHIEF MINISTER**

Youth engagement police officers, formerly known as school-based constables, build important relationships with school children across the Northern Territory. Under your watch, why have youth engagement police officers been taken from our schools, particularly when youth crime is such a huge concern to Territorians?

**Ms Fyles:** You didn't have enough police to have them in schools.

**Mr Higgins:** Here come the excuses again. Bart Simpson, sit down.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Member for Daly, please withdraw that.

**Mr HIGGINS:** I withdraw.

**ANSWER**

On 1 August last year, before we were elected to government, a decision was made to restructure how police work with youth in our schools. My understanding, talking to the Police Commissioner about what the

CLP did in the last days of their government was not to scrap school-based constables but was to rebadge and rework how the police were involved in the schools.

I am talking to the Commissioner further about how that works. We have taken a targeted approach with those 18 police working with youth justice officers. I can confirm that on 1 August 2016 the CLP made a decision about doing it differently with police in our schools. They do not use the term 'school-based constable'. They are not scrapping the school-based constable but changing how and which schools youth engagement officers engage with.

That happened in the last days of the CLP government. Obviously the Deputy Leader of the Opposition was not briefed by the then CLP Police Minister on that decision. I am talking to the Police Commissioner about how that works. We have already made decisions this year about targeting 18 police towards preventing crime before it occurs. That is the current model.

My understanding is that school-based constables have not been scrapped. The CLP changed the way that police were engaging in their schools: their name is now youth engagement officers. I may have the title wrong: it might be youth engagement and development officers. It was a decision made by the CLP on 1 August. We have made decisions since then about how police engage with youth.

We have those 18 police officers working with the 52 youth justice officers targeting crime before it occurs, taking their experience, their investigative skills and applying them not to the solving of crime but identifying those families and youth at risk to make sure we are targeting services to them. They then get the support they need so they do not embark on a life of crime.

That is the work we have done since we were elected—very targeted, specific work relevant to what is happening now on the streets. It has been done in full consultation with the Police Commissioner, the Minister for Territory Families and others about how we pull that plan together. It is all happening while the Royal Commission is sitting too.

I can confirm the decision made by the CLP in August. I can confirm what we have done with police and how we are working with youth, targeting police to make sure that we are tackling crime and doing everything we can to prevent it before it occurs.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION  
School-Based Constables**

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO to CHIEF MINISTER**

You are the Police Minister. You have been the Police Minister since the election last year. What are you doing? Will you reinstate youth engagement police officers in our schools?

**ANSWER**

I believe I answered that supplementary question in the previous answer.

We have made decisions to target police resources towards those youth justice officers working to identify crime before it has occurred.

My understanding of the CLP decision made in August was not to scrap school-based constables but change the way police were engaging with their schools at that community and school-based level. We have put those extra police resources, those 18, into targeting youth crime before it occurs-a very specific, targeted focusing.

My understanding is different to the Deputy Opposition Leader's about what is happening with police. I can confirm the decision by the former CLP Police Minister on 1 August about how police engage with school kids. That engagement with school kids is still occurring; their name is youth engagement officers and we have the 18 police officers on top of that targeting youth crime before it occurs, doing what we can to work with those families before it happens.