



POLICE ASSAULTS

Country needs more cops: MP

JO CAMPBELL

CALLS for more police officers in regional areas have been made as figures show that a staggering amount of non-aggravated assaults on police officers are inflicted in the country.

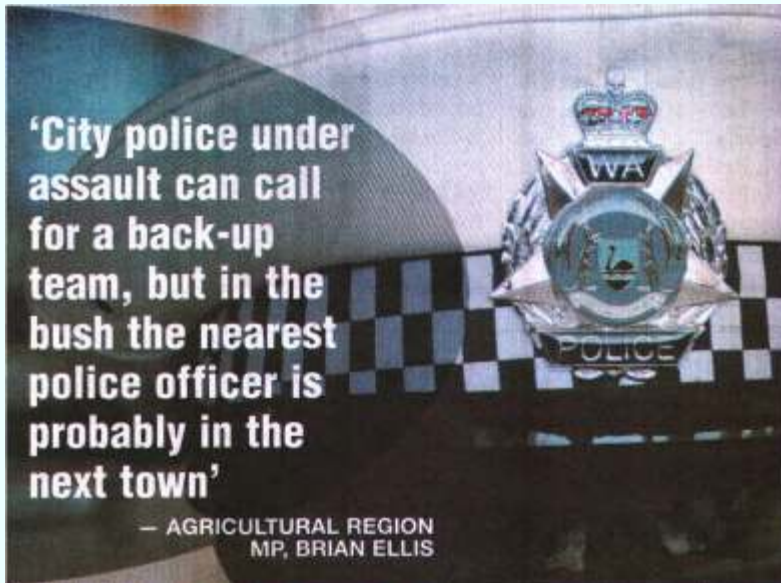
The Western Australia Police Service February Crime Statistics Report shows that, since July, one third of all non-aggravated assaults across the State were made on police in regional areas.

Currently there is legislation before Parliament to increase penalties for assaults on police officers, but last week Agricultural Region MLC Brian Ellis said country police needed more back-up.

“How many more assaults on country coppers will have to get media attention before Premier Carpenter increases police numbers in the bush?” he said.

Mr Ellis said Mid West and Wheatbelt shires were alarmed about low regional police numbers and were increasingly concerned about escalating alcohol-fuelled and drug-related offences.

“I wholeheartedly support increased penalties and mandatory minimum sentences, but many unpremeditated assaults on police occur when people are aggressively drunk or high on



drugs, and I doubt if they think about the legal consequences.

“City police under assault can call for a back-up team, but in the bush the nearest police officer is probably in the next town, or out patrolling the main highway.

“The back-up officer is not only too far away for effective intervention, but would also have to leave his own patch vulnerable in his absence.”

Mid West Gascoyne District Superintendent Fred Gere said legislation and people’s behaviour needed to change, rather than police numbers.

“At the end of the day it’s about the behaviour of the people that commit these crimes,” he said.

“By having more police you may alleviate a problem in one situation but not all.”

Spt Gere said the incidence of assault on country police was due to alcohol and drug abuse.

“Country policing is different to metro policing because of alcohol and illicit drug use creating an environment where people have a propensity for violence against police.”

**Police need protection too:
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