

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) — I move:

That, given the 22.4 per cent increase in crime in the City of Stonnington under the Andrews Labor government, the general disorder, attacks and threats to residents and traders in particular in Chapel Street, Greville Street and Toorak Road and the lack of local police resources, this house calls upon the Andrews Labor government in consultation with Victoria Police to —

- (1) act to immediately increase available police resources at the Prahran police station, including the provision of an additional available police car;
- (2) commit to the provision of expanded CCTV capacity in Chapel Street, Greville Street and Toorak Road;
- (3) immediately reopen the police cells at the Prahran police station closed by the current government in June 2015;
- (4) commit to a local policing policy where additional police are available on the beat in Chapel Street, Greville Street and Commercial and Toorak roads and in the surrounding residential streets; and

calls upon the Minister for Corrections, as the minister representing the Minister for Police, to report to the house in detail on the government's response to this motion within 60 days of its passage.

Right across the state we are seeing a significant increase in crime and a significant change in the nature of the crime that we are experiencing. Not only is the crime more sharp and more violent; there is actually a change in the type. We are experiencing more carjackings and more home invasions than we have traditionally seen. What is important here is that the community is very concerned about this. This is sometimes dismissed as a perception, but the perception that the community has that it is becoming more dangerous and Victoria is becoming more crime ridden is not just a perception, it is a perception based on reality.

In fact the nature of crime has changed. In fact there has been a deterioration in the position of Victoria, unlike in New South Wales, where there has been a decrease in reported crime. Here in Victoria there has been an increase — a significant and sharp increase — and in the case of the City of Stonnington a 22.4 per cent increase in the reported crime.

There are a number of key things, and I have reported to this chamber the significant meeting that I attended on Toorak Road with the traders of Toorak Road and the north end of Chapel Street, who are obviously very concerned about the impact of a lot of this crime on their shops, their retail premises and the other business premises in and around those particular areas. The nearly 50 people in attendance there included, as I have reported to this chamber, in particular two very senior police. As I have reported to this chamber, I think I and the people who were assembled there were very thankful for their time and their frankness. The police in attendance were very clear that they too shared many of the concerns of the traders.

There has been a number of sadly emblematic robberies that have occurred on Toorak Road. The series of jewellery robberies that have occurred of Tony Fialides the jeweller are frankly very frightening. The community I think understands that this is a change in the nature of the crime that we are experiencing — the gratuitous decision of some of those robbers to go into the shop and to trash it in such a frightening way. The impact on staff is also something that I think the community is very concerned about.

The police made it clear that it was not about just the traders and those immediately next to the traders but actually going back further from Toorak Road to the north and also to the south. They made the point that there was increasingly a series of robberies where people were coming into a house from the back of properties in a home invasion-style entry. They pointed to this trend in the specific area. They pointed out that people needed to be quite careful with their properties to

make sure that it was more difficult to break into a property from behind in that way. I think the community feel that they know that this is in fact what is occurring.

The police pointed to some of the issues around CCTV and very much put a lot of responsibility back on the traders. I am not denying that traders, home owners and others have got some share in this. This is a shared responsibility for all of us in terms of preventing and managing crime. But it was striking that they were very much putting responsibility back onto the traders, saying, 'You will need to upgrade your CCTV capacity. You will need to get more modern equipment. These are the sorts of steps that you can take'. There is no doubt that that will assist and that many of the traders following that meeting will in fact take those steps. It is clear that along streets like Toorak Road or Chapel Street in fact the CCTV coverage is not complete. There are council areas where I think council has greater responsibility, and I have since that meeting communicated very directly with the council on some of these matters. But importantly it is also a state government responsibility. The state government has got to step in and make sure that there is that stronger CCTV support.

The police also gave very clear messages about carjackings. They said that if you are stopped and you are tapped from behind and somebody gets out, you need to be extremely careful. You may well consider closing your doors and not responding but calling the police, if you can, to actually come and attend at the scene.

Concerningly, they pointed to the lack of police resources in this area of Stonnington. They made the point that often both a car in that vicinity and another one in Malvern are out at whatever else the police are legitimately doing, and the area is left without the police support that is required. They made this quite clear. Reading between the lines, you could see very much that the police were distressed about this lack of capacity to respond. I think this is a story that is being heard elsewhere around the state, but my point here today is that these are the facts of what is occurring at Stonnington. One part of this motion calls for the provision of an additional available police car. We actually need to make sure that in the north of Stonnington there is that additional capacity — that in the Prahran area there is enough capacity to respond.

I want to also say something importantly about the police cells. Under FOI we asked for the reasons and decisions behind the closure of the police cells. This occurred in the mid-period in 2015 under this government. It is extremely clear that this was a very unusual decision. People will know this building, the Prahran police station. It was formerly also a courthouse. There are cells and police office capacity, with the basing of a significant number of units and resources in that complex. The cells there have traditionally played an important role. The government decided to close those cells because they were too cold.

Mr Morris interjected.

Mr DAVIS — Too cold — that is exactly right. That is what the FOI makes clear, that they closed the cells because they were too cold.


I am not opposed to making sure that cells are reasonably in order, but those cells had been operating since 1978, when that complex opened. For them suddenly to be closed has left a significant lack of capacity in that area. I am sure that the police used these occasionally to put people in the cells in a temporary holding capacity while decisions were made on where they might go for a longer period. The idea that you would close them because of the temperature of the cells after them having operated for a very long period of time is a concern. We are not talking in this case about a building that might have a Dickensian feel. This is a building that was opened as brand spanking new in 1978. The decision of the government to close that in June 2015 I think is something that is a significant concern.

I know that there is concern not just in Chapel Street and Toorak Road. I met with Ed O'Donohue twice in fact recently in forums with local people from Greville Street and parts of Chapel Street. It is very clear that there is a developing and worsening situation in that area around Greville Street. Some of the frightening stories I heard about shop assistants who have been threatened and the various activities that have occurred with shop assistants and those who are trying to conduct their business lawfully and reasonably in and around that Greville Street area are a concern. I heard of one major chain that has retail operations all around Australia. This is one of three areas in Victoria where they have very specific and concerning problems. There have been WorkSafe

reports because of the lack of safety, and there are regular reports of staff being threatened and indeed in some cases customers being threatened.

So there needs to be a significant response. There needs to be a response by the government. They need to provide sufficient resources. We do need additional police to be on the beat in those areas. This is about ensuring that these areas are safe. There is I think an increasing challenge with a number of the homeless people who are in that area. I want to make the point that they obviously deserve strong support and they deserve resources to help them with their particular challenges. But that in no way means that people in the area should be in a position where they are threatened, frightened, attacked or put at risk or where retailers are having stock stolen.

Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.

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*** DAILY HANSARD PROOF ONLY - DO NOT QUOTE ***

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) — I move:

That this house notes —

- (1) the most recent data released by the Crime Statistics Agency Victoria on 15 June 2017 that shows crimes across Victoria are up 18.17 per cent;
- (2) crime in the Stonnington City Council area has risen 22.4 per cent since the Andrews Labor government came to office;
- (3) the crime wave engulfing Victoria is putting at risk Melbourne's reputation as the world's most livable city;
- (4) the concern of the community about the Andrews Labor government's failure to control law and order in Victoria;

and calls on Premier Daniel Andrews and the state Labor government to make community safety their number one priority to get the crime wave under control.

This follows my motion on Stonnington on an earlier general business day, and that was:

That, given the 22.4 per cent increase in crime in the City of Stonnington under the Andrews Labor government, the general disorder, attacks and threats to residents and traders in particular in Chapel Street, Greville Street and Toorak Road and the lack of local police resources, this house calls upon the Andrews Labor government in consultation with Victoria Police to —

- (1) act to immediately increase available police resources at the Prahran police station, including the provision of an additional available police car;
- (2) commit to the provision of expanded CCTV capacity in Chapel Street, Greville Street and Toorak Road;
- (3) immediately reopen the police cells at the Prahran police station closed by the current government in June 2015;
- (4) commit to a local policing policy where additional police are available on the beat in Chapel Street, Greville Street and Commercial and Toorak roads and in the surrounding residential streets;

and calls upon the Minister for Corrections, as the minister representing the Minister for Police, to report to the house in detail on the government's response to this motion within 60 days of its passage.

I will précis what I said in my earlier contribution and make a few additional points and then conclude, allowing others to speak.

Stonnington is not alone in the increase in crime that has occurred under the Andrews Labor government. The increase is 22.4 per cent.

Ms Crozier interjected.

Mr DAVIS — As Ms Crozier said, it is indeed out of control in this important part of Melbourne that we represent.

The community have come to me and other representatives in the area making very clear points in written statements and verbally at public meetings across a wide variety of fronts. It is very clear that there is inadequate police resourcing. I heard at a meeting hosted by the traders group on Toorak Road that there are insufficient resources. The police were quite clear on this. They talked at length about the carjackings, which are new crimes, and they gave advice about CCTV, which traders and others should put into operation. I have since raised that matter with the council because there will need to be some coordination of that, but I primarily believe it is a state government responsibility to ensure that CCTV is available in adequate quantity. I think you could detect the frustration of the police at the meeting. Police want as much CCTV as possible, because it does deter some crime and it does help solve crime on the other hand.

It is equally true that the tone of crime has worsened as the quantity has increased. Reported crime is up 22.4 per cent, as I said, in the City of Stonnington, but it is very clear that the threat and the violent nature of some of the crime has actually qualitatively changed in the last two and a half years. We have discussed in this chamber — and I made a number of points earlier about this — the government's weakening of bail laws, the inadequacy of their response on parole and their failure to respond properly to the Apex gang and to put the additional resources that are needed into policing. It is clear that the government has begun to act on police, but this has taken some time, and now there have obviously been youth justice issues, a number of which Ms Crozier has very strongly prosecuted and held the government to account on.

Mr O'Donohue has taken significant steps to have a number of aspects of the Crimes Act 1958 strengthened, bringing forward penalties, for example, for ramming police stations and other key measures of that nature. So there is a functional side to this and a response that can occur, but there is also importantly a very human side. Tony Fialides and other traders along Toorak Road have faced the onslaught of multiple robberies and a violent, thuggish approach that is just extreme and way beyond the pale. They are not alone; a number of others that I have spoken to have faced these very significant threats as well. The government has been too slow to move, and that is why I am bringing this motion on behalf of my community and the community in the City of Stonnington in this case.

It is interesting that in the last few days there have been further cases come to the fore. A young woman, Jodi, rang in to 3AW. The interviewer said, 'Jodi, what's the word on the street?'. Jodi said she was feeling a little shaken. She said about 15 minutes earlier on tram 78 on Chapel Street she witnessed two drug-affected people screaming at each other. One man spat at the other. She said:

The tram was full of schoolkids; it was really, really tense. I'm quite heavily pregnant ... It was just awful.

She said she had lived in the area for 12 years and had never experienced anything like it, 'so brazen, in broad daylight'. She did not understand and was very much overwhelmed by it. The interviewer asked if there were two groups of thugs affected by drugs. She said one drug-affected man was on the tram, and then a young man and woman got on the tram, 'yelling at each other'. A young boy looked at her for guidance as to what to do. She looked back to him with reassurance that this would be over soon and it would all be okay. The tram moved two or three stops and the man and woman got off. The man then bashed the doors wildly. The tram driver got up and asked if all passengers were okay.

This is also about the work environment for staff on public transport and the safety of kids in Chapel Street who are going home from school in daylight hours on the route 78 tram, heading towards Richmond from St Kilda. She said:

I have caught that route I can't even tell you how many times. I don't actually drive so I tram everywhere around Melbourne.

She said that out of all her experiences on trams this is probably the worst she has ever experienced. She called 3AW straightaway. By that time she had got off the tram to catch her breath but needed to get back on another tram to get home. She said, 'Hopefully it won't happen again'. Jodi said:

In that moment I was thinking maybe there needs to be security or something.

The interviewer said protective services officers are required and expressed the hope that her next trip will not be like this one. I only bring this up because it is a very poignant and current case study of the effect that people are experiencing. This is true along Toorak Road. It is true along Chapel Street. It is true along Greville Street. A number of the people that I have spoken to in Greville Street have faced extraordinary threats and extraordinary violence has occurred. There are antisocial activities of a significant kind and there is an increase in robberies.

The police gave advice to the traders — not just to the traders but to those who were a number of streets back from the main roads — that you need to be very careful about locking up the back of your property. You need to make sure that people cannot get around behind your property, because they will smash their way in in home invasions, and this is part of what we are actually facing. This is what the police were saying to traders and it is certainly the experience of so many people.

I know some wish to dismiss this. Some say that it can all be treated easily and we should all just take it very easy and go forward. I say that they are not the victims. They are not the people who have been hurt, they are not the people who have been threatened and they are not the people who are afraid. In this motion I bring forward the requirement for CCTV coverage. As I said, I have spoken to the council and it has raised this matter in its request to the government for additional CCTV coverage. I have also asked for additional police resources, and that is why I have brought these matters together in the motion.

In June 2015 the current government closed the Prahran police station cells, and I have the FOI request that lays out the steps there. I am not impressed by this particular approach. I note that in that period in 2015 the decision was made by the police to close that station, and it is clear there was not sufficient support for it to stay open from higher up. In relation to the urgent building works, I say get on and re-open these cells. They actually provide an important additional local facility. They mean that police are not taken out of the local area. The capacity is there to manage this. Let us be quite clear. These are not some Dickensian cells. This police complex at Prahran was opened in 1978 so it is actually relatively modern. I have seen those cells. Mr O'Donohue was with me at the time when we saw them, and it is very clear that those cells are not things that should be closed. They should be available to police.

QUOTE NOT SUPPLIED IN TIME FOR VERIFICATION.

As of 15:35 hours on 24 June 2015 the cell complex at Prahran is closed until further notice due to ventilation issues —

that is, 24 June 2015. On 26 June 2015:

Further to the previous message, the cell complex at Prahran will be closed indefinitely pending the carrying out of urgent building works.

I say, two and bit years is long enough for urgent building works and it is time to re-open the cells. At this stage it goes on to say that the date of re-opening is not known.

A further message will be broadcast when further information is received.

There was an examination done and it was concluded that the cells were cold, and that that is a key reason why they were closed. I say that people are put in the cells for good reason. They talked about hypothermia, but this issue had not arisen previously. It seems to me that there is every capacity for those cells to be re-opened and to strengthen the local policing effort. The

government should get on and do it. With the crime wave that is occurring in the Stonnington area there is no excuse for the cells to remain closed as the government appears determined to do so.

I have also called for the government to commit to a local policing policy whereby additional police are available on the beat in Chapel Street, Greville Street, Commercial Road, Toorak Road and in the surrounding residential streets. I have spoken to many traders and local people who have not had a quick police response. Overwhelmingly the police do the very best they can and I have the highest regard for them. But they do not have the resources. It is clear that there are only two cars in the north of Stonnington, one on the Malvern side and one on the western side, and that is insufficient. If one of those is out on another job, there is insufficient capacity to respond. Person after person after person, trader after trader after trader have made it clear that those additional resources are required.

It is for those reasons — for the safety of the community — that I have brought forward this motion. I urge members in the chamber, including those who represent the area, to support this motion. It is a constructive way forward. It sends some clear signals to the government, and indeed to the need for the government to work in consultation with Victoria Police. It sends a clear signal about what is expected in our community and the additional resources that are required, the additional steps that need to be taken: re-open the cells; more CCTV; additional resources in the form of a car; additional local policing policy; and a report by the Minister for Corrections to this chamber in 60 days as to how the government has implemented these requests from the chamber.

This is legitimate. The fact is that crime is rising and the tone, shape and nature of that crime is changing very, very much for the worse under this government. A stand needs to be made. Enough is enough, and this motion makes it clear that in the City of Stonnington there should be a very strong response.

Business interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.

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COUNCIL

Stonnington police resources

DAVID DAVIS

*** DAILY HANSARD PROOF ONLY - DO NOT QUOTE ***

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) — I am pleased to rise in reply on this important motion, which points to the problems in the City of Stonnington with respect to crime and general disorder and also calls for additional resources at the Prahran police station, including the provision of an additional police car; a commitment to the expansion of CCTV capacity in key locations; the immediate reopening of the cells at Prahran police station closed by Labor in June 2015; and a local policing policy whereby additional police are available on the beat in a number of named locations and in surrounding residential streets. It also calls on the Minister for Corrections, as the minister representing the Minister for Police in this place, to report on this in detail with respect to the government's actions in response within 60 days.

This is a motion that cries out on behalf of the community to say crime has risen significantly under this government. They have botched —

Mr Gepp — Rubbish!

Mr DAVIS — I take up the interjection. It is not rubbish. It is a fact according to the Crime Statistics Agency's own figures — the government's own figures — which reported crime in the City of Stonnington is up 22.4 per cent since the Labor Party came to power. That is, to take up Pennicuik's point, a very precise date. They came to power in December, and since that point the crime rate has risen. I heard Mr Melhem twist and weave and torture himself to try to argue that when figures are greater than earlier figures, that is not an increase. Of course it is an increase; everyone knows it is an increase. It is a scandal that the government has done very little in response. It has weakened the bail laws. It has got an appalling record on parole. It will not release key information on parole.

I have to say the government has hamstrung the police in their response. I have the highest regard for Victoria Police and the policemen and policewomen who do the work that is required in this state on behalf of all of us. I was at pains in my contribution to point out that when police

spoke to Toorak Road traders you could feel the agitation, you could feel the anguish beneath what they were saying and you could feel that they were not able to get out and do the work they need to do and they do not have the resources from government that they need to do it.

Mr Gepp interjected.

Mr DAVIS — No, at first you cut police. That is what you did. You also closed the police cells in this particular area of Melbourne. And do you know what? There has been a massive increase in crime in that area. That is what you did. Your government did it, and you have got to share some of the responsibility.

I make the point that the tone has changed in the area too — the kind of crime that is being committed. These very severe carjackings, the home invasions and the burglaries that are occurring along main streets are very serious indeed. People are being hurt. This is not a matter for trite comment; this is a matter for very serious response. I read out the interview that was on 3AW just a few days ago with a woman on the 78 tram who encountered extraordinary violence. I read out her entire interview because it showed very clearly the sorts of problems that people are facing. She is a local, she is someone who is facing this and she is someone who previously did not face this sort of crime — this sort of violent threat.

The point here is that the you have got to take a stand. You either stand with the community against this crime, against this violence, against these terrible activities that are occurring to people, or you stand with the criminals. That is what I say.

I say Labor and the Greens stand on the wrong side of this equation. Labor has not acted in the way it should have acted. Premier Daniel Andrews is responsible for not acting sharply and for not acting when the crime rate went up and when we started to see types of crime — the carjackings and the home invasions — that were not a part of Victoria in the previous period. The difference in the crime rate here compared with other states is significant. Mr O'Donohue has made the point repeatedly that in New South Wales the crime rate has fallen and in Victoria the crime rate has gone up very significantly, and the two states and their approaches stand in stark contrast.

In terms of Ms Pennicuik's contribution, honestly what a pathetic contribution. I do not want to be unkind about this, because I know that she is well motivated. But the fact is that the Greens have no way through here. All they do is wring their hands and say that we should let them out of jail. Then they will be back on the streets terrorising the community. I have heard their responses on a number of these issues. I have heard the member for Prahran in the other place, Mr Hibbins, say at public meetings, 'Oh, we've got to stop recidivism'. Well, hooley dooley! Of course you have to work on recidivism, but sometimes you need some tough penalties to deal with the recidivists. You need to send a very clear message.

Ms Crozier made some points about violent youth offenders and the impact they are having on the community. I say that we have got to take a stand. The stand has to be to support Victoria Police. Mr O'Donohue has made this point very clearly. The police have to have the resources, but they have to have the moral backing too, and it is the role of this chamber and this Parliament to send that message. Mr Melhem tried to say that we were telling the police what to do. No. Of course this needs to be done in conjunction with the police, but you need to provide the police with the resources they need. We know that the police have not had the support that they need under this government, and the community is sick of it. The community is saying, 'Enough is enough'. The community in Stonnington is saying, 'Enough is enough'. They want action. This is a response to that.

I have met with people in Greville Street, I have met with people near Chapel Street, I have met with people on Toorak Road and I have met with individuals right across the Prahran electorate and the Stonnington area, and they are saying, 'Enough is enough'. The community deserves to be safe. The community deserves to have a really clear signal sent from this chamber. They are as sick of the weakness of this government and, frankly, they are sick of the weakness of the member for Prahran who will not stand up for them and will not stand up on behalf of the community on these important matters. So I say, and this is important, I seek the support of the chamber on this important motion.

Motion agree to.