



**Police shortage confirmed
1 February 2006**

Numerous calls confirming the shortage of police officers on Eyre Peninsula, and the stress that this puts on serving personnel, emphasised Labor mismanagement, Member for Flinders Liz Penfold said.

The calls responded to statements by Mrs Penfold that police stations on Eyre Peninsula are understaffed or vacant.

"Callers also agreed with my support for the police, and the adverse effect on morale that these shortages have," she said.

Mrs Penfold referred particularly to Ceduna where only 11 police are on duty when the full contingent should be 20.

"Minister for Police Kevin Foley said in his tirade that there were only three vacancies at Ceduna.

"However that does not take into account officers who are on leave and therefore not available for duty at the station.

"I also contend that there should be no vacancies, especially if Labor rhetoric is correct," she said.

Mrs Penfold said Mr Foley claimed that police force numbers are up by 600 since Labor took office and that the force is the largest in the state's history.

"If that is so, then I would ask, Where are those extra 600?"

"Why do we have vacancies, why are police stations left unmanned for long periods of time?" she asked.

Mrs Penfold said one caller who attempted to register a firearm advised there were no police in Minnipa or Elliston, and the Wudinna officer was on leave. The officer from Lock attended Wudinna occasionally however three attempts to see him failed when he was unavailable because he had been called elsewhere.

"My constituent said his experience supports the contention that it is very difficult to see police due to lack of numbers.

"That does not confirm Mr Foley's statement that 'there is no police shortage on the Eyre Peninsula'," she said.

Mrs Penfold said the police station in another country town on Eyre Peninsula was vacant for about 12 months, with that position only being filled recently.

"The Liberal Opposition and the Police Association of South Australia forced the Labor state government into promising 200 extra police by 2005 however, on the advice that I have, that is one more Labor promise that has not been delivered," she said.

Mrs Penfold said the shortage of serving police personnel had a ripple effect into the community and into other government departments.

“Our parks and environment staff are also under resourced and over worked which, for example, has an immediate effect on detection of illegal cannabis operations in our hectares of parks.

“Cannabis is a major contributor to the theft and domestic violence within all our communities.

“Fisheries compliance officers are scarce on the ground in a region which produces more than 65 per cent of the state’s seafood and has a coastline similar in length to Tasmania’s.

“Each of these situations impacts on an already over-stressed and under resourced police force,” she said.

Mrs Penfold said the Labor Party’s policy of ‘population based funding’ does not take into account the cost and difficulties for police, Fisheries or parks personnel working in an area as large as Eyre Peninsula.

Mrs Penfold said Mr Foley’s attempt to pass the issue off as ‘playing politics’ denies the reality of the situation and brings into question the Minister’s fitness for the portfolio. ENDS

Police staffing 30 January 2006

A critical shortage of police numbers on Eyre Peninsula is affecting policing and staff morale, Member for Flinders Liz Penfold said.

She cited Ceduna, where she has been told only 11 officers are stationed instead of the 20 it should have, as an example.

“A large part of policing is preventative although we seldom hear much about this side of police work.

“Community safety depends on preventative policing to stop incidents rather than catching offenders when the law is broken,” she said.

Mrs Penfold said a shortage of officers gravely affected investigation into criminal activity.

“I have heard Eyre Peninsula referred to as the national cannabis capital.

“Whether or not this is correct, we certainly have plenty of national parks and reserves where cannabis production can occur and very few parks people, so this is just another job for our over-stretched local police force.

“The remains of many such enterprises were discovered after the Tulka and Wangary fires, and nobody knows how many more may be in operation but are undiscovered,” she said.

Mrs Penfold said reports of an increase in the number of police officers on the beat were questionable.

“If there are more police on the ground as the government claims, then they are not on Eyre Peninsula,” she said.
ENDS