

WESTERN INDEPENDENT

FEATURE

**Body graffiti
or fine art?**
Page 14



ARTS

**Mallard
framed**
Page 29



FEATURE

**Combe at
Fairbridge**
Page 17



NEWS

**Violence in
Fremantle**
Page 10



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PROTEST: Police unite for mandatory jail terms for assaults on officers.

Photo: Joanna Macarthur

Court criticism: Quigley reacts

Gabrielle Young

Shadow Attorney-General John Quigley has branded police union president Michael Dean a judge basher following Mr Dean's strident criticism of judicial appointments.

Mr Dean claims dissatisfaction with the court system and the inadequate sentencing had led to a push for mandatory sentencing.

"Most police officers and the public have lost confidence in the courts because of the calibre of the people they are appointing there," Mr Dean said.

He claims the competency and responsibility of the courts has been degraded.

Mr Quigley said Mr Dean's statements were disgraceful.



RALLY: Michael Dean speaks out.

"This is just another example of irresponsible judge bashing," he said.

"The police union and its president are attempting to destroy public confidence in our judicial system and it is

reprehensible," Mr Quigley said.

"The judges are not political and are not free to defend themselves."

Mr Quigley called on the Attorney General to denounce the police union president's comments.

In response Attorney-General Christian Porter said he supported all judicial appointments made under the previous government.

"The previous Government's introduction of mandatory sentencing for home burglary offences had nothing to do with not trusting judicial officers, and neither does the Liberal/National mandatory sentencing in 2008," he said.

"In each instance, Parliament reflected the Western Australian community's view that these offences are so serious that they required a term of imprisonment."

The Criminal Code Amendment Bill, if passed, will impose a mandatory jail sentence of at least 12 months on offenders who endanger the life or cause permanent injury to a police officer, and a sentence of at least nine months for those who cause them bodily harm.

The legislation is a popularly supported government initiative following a number of high profile cases of police assaults, including the acquittal of a man who head-butted Constable Matthew Butcher leaving him partially paralysed.

Jim McGinty, the Labor Attorney General at the time of the appointments, said there was a great danger in the police union running government policy.

"That would pose a more real threat to the freedom and safety of the com-

munity than any other thing that I can think of," he said.

"If Mr Dean isn't prepared to put up then he should shut up and he should name an inappropriate judicial appointment and he won't do that because he can't," he said.

Mr Dean said he could not respond because it would be defamatory for him to even indicate an appointment he believed to be inappropriate.

He said of Mr McGinty and Mr Quigley: "The difference between those two people and me is that they are black letter lawyers more concerned with the form of law and I'm concerned about the justice results that come from it".

The Office of the Chief Justice declined to comment on Mr Dean's statements.

More reports – page 3