

YOUTH DETENTION — INFRASTRUCTURE REVIEW

**930. Ms C.M. ROWE to the Premier:**

On behalf of the member for Bicton, I acknowledge that she has visitors in the public gallery—the deputy principal and year 6 students from Attadale Primary School.

I refer to the Cook Labor government's commitment to addressing Western Australia's long-term youth detention needs.

- (1) Can the Premier outline to the house what steps are being taken to improve safety, security and welfare for juveniles in detention?
- (2) Can the Premier outline to the house how else this government is delivering for Western Australians?

**Mr R.H. COOK replied:**

I thank the member for the question. Before I start, I pay tribute to our great friend and colleague. Earlier today Minister Johnston announced his retirement from cabinet. It is an opportunity to note and place on the record our gratitude for his service to the people of Western Australia and the Labor movement. This will be his last question time on the front bench, and I would just like to extend my personal gratitude to him. Today, of course, also marks the final sitting day of 2023 for the Legislative Assembly. It has been a big year, with many changes. All three parties in the Assembly have a different leader from when they started the year, which is an extraordinary fact to contemplate! From a Labor government perspective, we have been extremely busy.

- (1)–(2) When I started as Premier in June, I made a commitment to significantly reform and provide a reset at the Banksia Hill juvenile justice centre. I want to put the centre on a better pathway. This included a review of infrastructure needs in Western Australia's youth justice system and measures to increase staffing. The recently completed review confirmed that Banksia Hill Detention Centre cannot currently safely and securely accommodate our most challenging young offenders. In response, we have confirmed that we are building a new high-security therapeutic youth detention facility. This will be built next to the existing centre. The proposed two-site model will see the most challenging young people provided with high levels of support in the new facility. That will allow the current facility to focus on giving stable therapeutic interventions and education to more settled detainees. Importantly, the new facility will allow for the closure of unit 18 in a sensible and safe manner.

Before that happens, we will spend \$169 million on enhancing the facilities and services available at unit 18 and Banksia Hill Detention Centre. That means that more staff, more support and better safety measures will be in place. There is no doubt that it has been a challenging year for youth justice, but we are committed to turning our youth justice system around. I want to commend the Minister for Corrective Services for the work that he and his team are doing. This year, 2023, has been a year of progress, and we have made great progress at Banksia Hill, with those young detainees now experiencing many out-of-room hours each day, undertaking schooling, health, cultural and recreational activities as part of their rehabilitation process.

In addition to the juvenile justice reset, my Labor government has continued to fix the financial mess we inherited. We returned to a AAA credit rating this year, after eight long years. Following the pandemic, we are seeing green shoots from our investment in the health system. There has been a reduction in ambulance ramping and an increase in the number of elective surgeries being undertaken. We have reinvigorated the training sector, signed a new national skills agreement, invested more in TAFE and offered fee-free courses to more than 30 000 people.

Then there is infrastructure. Members will be aware that we started the year with huge floods in the Kimberley, destroying structures like the Fitzroy River Bridge. In an incredible feat, a new and improved bridge has already been built and will be open to traffic before Christmas. That is nine months ahead of the scheduled completion and represents an outstanding opportunity for the region. Meanwhile, Metronet is absolutely steaming ahead, with level crossings on the Armadale line gone, Bayswater station reopened and construction on other rail lines well underway. There has been extensive cost-of-living support for all Western Australians who are doing it tough.

Madam Speaker, thank you for all your efforts this year; 2024 will present more challenges and opportunities, and I look forward to working with you to build on the achievements of 2023.