

CORRECTIVE SERVICES — ABORIGINAL OFFENDER MANAGEMENT

Statement by Minister for Corrective Services

MR F.M. LOGAN (Cockburn — Minister for Corrective Services) [10.00 am]: The over-representation of Aboriginal people in the justice system, particularly in prison, has a significant impact on the cultural, emotional and social wellbeing of those individuals, and their families and communities. To help target this issue, the Corrective Services division in the Department of Justice has developed a framework on the management of Aboriginal offenders to guide practical and meaningful changes to custodial practices. This plan is designed to improve Aboriginal wellbeing and to reflect an ongoing and sincere commitment to improve the management of Aboriginal offenders in the justice system. The philosophy of participation, promotion of culture and partnership—PPP—will be applied to departmental priorities and any new policies or initiatives. All staff will have a responsibility to consider Aboriginal wellbeing and the PPP philosophy in every aspect—from the prison floor to implementing new training programs and recruitment strategies.

Participation is the foundation of the philosophy. Aboriginal people must be engaged in initiatives for their wellbeing and supported with appropriate platforms for participation. At the heart of participation is a culturally safe environment that is inclusive and responsive to the needs of Aboriginal offenders. Promotion of culture is at the core of the philosophy. PPP recognises that culture is central to Aboriginal wellbeing. By celebrating and promoting the value of Aboriginal culture and working respectfully with Aboriginal people, the department can move beyond being culturally aware to becoming culturally competent in how it manages Aboriginal offenders.

Partnership is the driving force of the philosophy. Building meaningful partnerships of mutual benefit with Aboriginal organisations, elders, other respected persons and the broader community is critical to successful rehabilitation and reintegration of Aboriginal offenders. A culturally safe environment is a place that recognises the fundamental role of culture, community and spirituality in Aboriginal wellbeing and aims to support such connections.

I want to reassure members and a justifiably sceptical Western Australian Aboriginal community that the practical application of the PPP has already commenced with the introduction of languages being taught at prisons throughout the state and the review of Aboriginal services committees, aiming to improve connection to community and improving cultural competency at each prison and community corrections centre. The Department of Justice is also recording skin and nation groups in the total offender management system in order to improve cultural sensitivity around placement of prisoners. I want to acknowledge the work of the department in developing this framework and the work of the Commissioner of Corrective Services, Mr Tony Hassall, and his team in driving this reform. The PPP sets a very clear message on the standards of care expected from Corrective Services, reflecting modern custodial practices, genuine respect for those in our custody and the expectations of our community to deliver better outcomes for the Western Australian community.