

COMMISSIONER OF CORRECTIVE SERVICES — TONY HASSALL — RETIREMENT

Statement by Minister for Corrective Services

MR F.M. LOGAN (Cockburn — Minister for Corrective Services) [2.04 pm]: I rise to inform Parliament that the Commissioner of Corrective Services, Tony Hassall, has announced his retirement after a long history in Corrective Services. Starting his career in the United Kingdom, the commissioner has spent the last six years here in Western Australia, including holding the position of Commissioner of Corrective Services since early 2017. Through his leadership of Corrective Services, he has overseen a significant period of reform, including modernising operational practice and reforming youth justice, as well as the significant expansion of the custodial estate to address the increased growth in prisoner numbers. He has also overseen the development of targeted alcohol and other drug treatments in specialised prisons and the expansion of electronic monitoring in the community, as well as record levels of recruitment of prison staff.

More recently, Commissioner Hassall's leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic has ensured that some of the most vulnerable people in the estate were protected from the devastating effects of the virus, whilst simultaneously ensuring prisoners behind bars could contribute to the state's response. However, it has always been clear to me that for Tony, improving relationships with our First Nation people was always a personal priority. His sincere engagement with Aboriginal people is evidenced by his enduring relationships with Aboriginal groups across the state and his open communication with prisoner advocacy groups such as the Deaths in Custody Watch Committee.

As commissioner, Tony always sought to meet the families of loved ones who passed unexpectedly while in custody, to attend the funerals of those who passed in his care and to listen to the families' sorrow and grief. As the leader of an agency that has a painful past with Aboriginal people, few commissioners could ever take such steps, but for Tony, it was a very obvious way to show compassion and respect. As minister, I personally saw that these actions spoke very clearly to the level of integrity and sincerity of his leadership, actions that had been sorely overdue. As he has said in the past, some may forget the things you said, they may forget what you did, but they will never forget how you made them feel.

On behalf of the McGowan government, I wish to congratulate Mr Hassall for his outstanding career in corrections and his time as corrective services commissioner. From a trainee prison officer as a teenager in the UK, to governor of some of their largest prisons, to corrections commissioner in this state of Western Australia, we have been truly fortunate to benefit from his lifetime of experience in the final phase of his career. I wish him and his partner, Gerry, all the best in the next chapter of their lives.

Members: Hear, hear!