

MENTAL HEALTH — JUSTICE REINVESTMENT

97. Hon SALLY TALBOT to the Minister for Mental Health:

Given that mental health initiatives form an essential part of justice reinvestment programs worldwide, what is the minister's response to the growing community support for this approach to crime prevention?

Hon HELEN MORTON replied:

I thank the shadow spokesperson on disability, mental health and child protection for her question and the opportunity to make a comment about this matter.

As the member is aware, the government has made a substantial investment in mental health courts. This is a new initiative that has been undertaken in Western Australia—something that we talked about when we talked about decriminalising mental illness. This government has now made a significant investment in establishing a mental health court in both the adult court and the children's court. As I have mentioned before, I have sat in on both of those courts and have seen them in operation, I have talked to the people who are operating them, and I have had the opportunity to see how people can actually be diverted from the justice system in a preventative way to enable more of a treatment program rather than a justice program to be put in place for them. That does not take away the responsibility for these people to have a sentence passed at some point in time. But if these people who are part of the mental health court are able to stick with their treatment programs and achieve good outcomes, it mitigates against having a prison sentence or having a further involvement with the justice system. That is just one example of a reinvestment that is already occurring in that respect. The other example is that in this last election, we made a commitment to expand the drug court to be a drug and alcohol court. Once again, I have had a look at this court in operation, and I was really impressed with the amount of work that the courts can undertake to divert people from the justice system and back into more of a treatment program. Those are just a couple of examples of the reinvestment that is already taking place. I have absolutely no doubt that the new Minister for Corrective Services, Joe Francis, and I will be working together on this for a long time to come.