

CORONAVIRUS — PRISONS

Statement by Minister for Corrective Services

MR F.M. LOGAN (Cockburn — Minister for Corrective Services) [2.04 pm]: I rise to inform the house of the resumption of prison services and operations within Western Australia's custodial facilities as part of current recovery planning and the state government's road map. In response to the COVID-19 outbreak, the Department of Justice moved swiftly to implement a range of measures intended to prevent persons with COVID-19 from entering WA prisons and detention centres, and to keep those who live and work in our correctional facilities safe. This included the suspension and restriction of a range of prison services and operations to reduce unnecessary movements within, and in and out of, facilities and to support social distancing and other health and infection control measures. We recognise that the impact of these decisions on prisoners and detainees, as well as their families, was significant. These steps, however, were necessary. It was recognised that the best way to protect individual prisoners, detainees, staff and their families from exposure to COVID-19 was to protect the prison community as a whole. In this regard, prevention is the most effective strategy. I can advise that we have been successful in this approach with no confirmed cases of COVID-19 within the WA custodial estate.

As the attention now turns to the recovery planning process, and in line with the WA government road map, a range of prison services and operations will be resumed in a planned and safe manner and in consultation with the WA Department of Health and the Chief Medical Officer. I am pleased to inform the house that specific services and operations have resumed, including church services, prisoner team sports, use of training equipment within prisoner gyms, temporary transfers for visits and other non-essential purposes. COVID-19 remains a threat to the health of our prisoners and detainees. We must ensure that while we are resuming these services, we do not become complacent and that custodial facilities continue to ensure hygiene and infection control requirements and other preventive measures remain in effect. I can also advise the house that planning is underway to resume social visits, reintegration leave, prisoner employment programs and inter-prison visits.

I am immensely proud of the work undertaken by the Department of Justice to ensure the health and safety of prisoners and detainees within our care. I wish to pass on my sincere thanks and gratitude to the hardworking staff of the Department of Justice in keeping our community safe during these difficult times.