

PRISONS — INFRASTRUCTURE EXPANSION

**15. Mr R.R. WHITBY to the Minister for Corrective Services:**

I refer to the construction of four new prison units at Casuarina Prison that got underway yesterday.

- (1) Can the minister update the house on how these new prison beds will ease the overcrowding of prisons that was inherited from the previous Liberal–National government?
- (2) Can the minister advise the house on how local businesses and local workers will benefit from the construction of this project?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN replied:**

I thank the member for Baldvis very much indeed for his interest in state security and the creation of local jobs, particularly in the southern suburbs.

- (1)–(2) I rise with great pleasure to talk about the sod-turning ceremony that I was a part of yesterday at Casuarina Prison, which will result in the creation of four new units, containing 512 extra prison beds for the state of Western Australia. This expansion of Casuarina Prison comes on top of the 160 new beds, the construction of which is well underway at Bunbury Regional Prison, that will be delivered to the state of Western Australia in August this year. The four new units at Casuarina are aimed to be completed, the first two, by December this year and, the second two, in April next year. Two of those prison units go to rehabilitation and will deal with the challenges that we have within the prison system. One unit will be the male alcohol and drug rehabilitation facility that we promised in the election and forms part of our methylamphetamine action plan.

I inform the house about the outcome of the Wandoo facility, which I talked about last year and which was opened last year—the 80-bed facility near Fiona Stanley Hospital, which is the female alcohol and drug rehabilitation facility. The first 24 women will be graduating from that facility over the next couple of weeks and they have basically turned around their lives. It is a very, very good story. I hope that we can achieve the same thing with the male prison units at Casuarina. One of the other prison units of the two groups of prison units, I hope, will also deal with some of the problems we have in prisons whereby people who are suffering from mental health problems are not properly treated within the prison system itself. They do suffer, they do get picked on, they do cause problems for both prisoners and staff, and they are better placed in a separate unit where their problems can be addressed. So the step-up, step-down facility will also be part of rehabilitation at Casuarina Prison.

I point this out because in contrast with the situation that I was left with as the Minister for Corrective Services, I have to inform the house that after two years as Minister for Corrective Services and after going through the details of every component of the then Department of Corrective Services, which is now part of the Department of Justice, it has become very, very clear to me that that portfolio was basically abandoned in 2014—abandoned. No money whatsoever was put into the portfolio. There was no expansion or any investment in infrastructure or programs that could deal with what was a rapidly increasing prison population. The population increased by 25 per cent in just three years, yet money was cut from the budget. A staff freeze was put in place in 2016. The churn in terms of the number of prison officers who leave the system is between 80 and 90 a year, and over a three-year period we had a staff freeze in place. Consequently, we are now catching up, trying to deal with the understaffing and overcrowding as fast as we possibly can by taking on more prison officers. It is not as though the previous government was not warned. The former Commissioner of Corrective Services, Mr McMahon, in 2015 in the estimates hearing said —

If we keep growing at this rate—I am being conservative—in the medium term we potentially need to be walking into a new facility over the next three years. That has been discussed at a range of levels that I cannot go into, but I am well aware of the figures and the projections.

*Point of Order*

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** This question is obviously a ministerial statement, which could have been done at the start.

**The SPEAKER:** Sit down! I will call you to order if you do frivolous points of order. Minister, you will get to the end of this.

*Questions without Notice Resumed*

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** I will finish up very soon. But I quote Mr McMahon to point out to the house that the previous government was well aware of the overcrowding problems, it was well aware that it needed to invest and failed to do so. Mark that attitude in contrast with what we are doing. We will have 900 new beds in place next year—that is nearly a whole new prison within three years—and we will have increased dramatically the number of prison

officers staffing those prisons. That is what we are doing as a McGowan Labor government and it stands in stark contrast with what the former government did with the corrections system.