

CORONAVIRUS — CORRECTIVE SERVICES — RESPONSE

Statement by Minister for Corrective Services

MR F.M. LOGAN (Cockburn — Minister for Corrective Services) [9.04 am]: In the Department of Justice, Corrective Services is actively monitoring the state and national situation with novel coronavirus, and is responding accordingly to minimise the risk of its spread. Practical and proportionate steps have been put in place to assist in slowing the transmission of COVID-19 in prisons across the state, including the provision of alcohol-based rub and soaps, and posters promoting good hand hygiene, including cough and sneeze etiquette.

The department has established the COVID-19 task force, headed by an assistant commissioner. The role of the task force is to coordinate the Corrective Services' response to the emerging threat and undertake cross-agency liaison, including with the Department of Health and police, and participation in the State Emergency Coordination Group. Prisons, community corrections and youth justice services are updating business continuity plans, including our standard prison pandemic plan. The task force is also coordinating strategies across prisons daily with superintendents, to take into account increasing tiers of response such as significant loss of staff, actions to restrict visitor access and statewide prisoner movements. Ongoing liaison and coordination is occurring with courts and tribunal services. Prison, community corrections and youth justice operations are being monitored on a daily basis. Emergency response plans are being reviewed, including the local and state-based incidents response capability. Overtime controls are being assessed daily by the operations team and will be revised if required.

The COVID-19 task force will be the single source of truth for Corrective Services' communications, with key messages being made available via the intranet. A dedicated coronavirus update landing page providing up-to-date information and links to the WA Department of Health COVID-19 information has been developed. Last week, communications were issued to staff, prisoners and visitors to prisons, which include WA Health advice posters prompting good hygiene. Prison visitors are also required to complete a questionnaire on overseas travel and personal health prior to the approval of the visit. Updates are being provided this week based on new advice received from WA Health and the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

Further advice has been provided to staff about self-isolation. In addition, a number of meetings have taken place with the unions. Corrective Services is also now sitting on the State Emergency Coordinating Group for cross-agency coordination for COVID-19. Stocks of personal protective equipment are sufficient, but are under continuing review. Logistics and supply chains are being prioritised to ensure that essential supplies are maintained to ensure business continuity. Staff have been advised to follow the advice of WA Health, and should they fall into the high-risk category, be symptomatic or have returned from overseas since midnight on Sunday, they should self-isolate for 14 days. Industrial relations and human resources have developed a plan to ensure that staff are able to take leave in the event that they fall into this group.