

**CORONAVIRUS — PRISONS — SOCIAL VISITS**

*Statement by Minister for Corrective Services*

**MR F.M. LOGAN (Cockburn — Minister for Corrective Services)** [12.07 pm]: I rise to inform the house that as part of the current recovery planning and the state government's roadmap, from Saturday, 27 June 2020, social visits to all prisons and Banksia Hill Detention Centre will resume. In response to COVID-19, the Department of Corrective Services moved quickly to implement a range of measures that were intended to prevent 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 movement within and in and out of facilities, and to support social distancing and other health and infection control measures. The suspension of contact and social visits was one such step that was taken.

We recognise the impact of these decisions on prisoners and detainees, as well as their families and loved ones, has been significant. The decision to suspend contact and social visits was particularly important given the roles that families and loved ones play in the successful rehabilitation and reintegration of prisoners and detainees in the community. These steps were, however, necessary. It was recognised that the best way of protecting 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. So far this approach has been very successful, with no confirmed cases of COVID-19 within the WA custodial estate.

In line with the Western Australian government roadmap, a range of prison services and operations are being recommenced. This will occur incrementally in a planned and safe manner and in consultation with the WA Department of Health and the Chief Medical Officer. All social visits will include social distancing measures, such as keeping 1.5 metres away from each other, the closure of communal play areas for visiting children, and no touching or physical contact between prisoners and their visitors. In line with the reintroduction of visits, the Department of Corrective Services has focussed on safety and the prevention of illicit substances entering the prison system. Since visit restrictions were applied, drugs and other contraband in prisons have significantly decreased. Steps to assist prisoners' abstinence from drugs have been implemented, including the trial of new electronic security and scanning equipment. Increased penalties will also apply for those who are caught attempting to smuggle drugs into prisons.

This has been a very difficult time for everyone, including those with family and loved ones in prison and detention. It is important to acknowledge the impact that decisions, particularly around contact and social visits, have had and to thank those who have been affected for the sacrifice that they and their families have made to help keep our prisons and detention centres safe.