

CASUARINA PRISON — EXPANSION

431. Mr R.R. WHITBY to the Minister for Corrective Services:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's investment in expanding Casuarina Prison, which will include the state's first supermax unit. Can the minister outline to the house how this supermax unit will help corrective services in keeping staff safe and the state's prisons in good order?

Mr F.M. LOGAN replied:

I thank the member for Baldivis for that great question. I remind the house about what the McGowan government inherited back in 2017 in the Department of Justice's corrections arm, which was nothing short of a train wreck. We had not enough beds for prisoners, we had no money and the policies were not working properly. It was an absolute train wreck. Over the last three and a half years we have completely transformed the corrections arm of the Department of Justice to make it one of the leaders in Australia. We have not only put more beds into place, with 212 beds immediately in 2017, but also expanded Bunbury Regional Prison, using 92.5 per cent local content; the 512-bed expansion at Casuarina Prison is now complete; the Wandoo Rehabilitation Prison for women is absolutely world-leading in what it is doing at the moment; and of course we now have the 344-bed expansion for Casuarina Prison. Part of that expansion will be another 128 mainstream beds. Some of it will be for the issues that we have with mental health in prison. Of course, a significant number of prisoners have mental health problems. They have not been looked after well in the past. We will be building a facility to actually help alleviate some of their problems as part of the rehabilitation process. There will also be a facility for the ageing prisoners, who are currently in our infirmary in Casuarina as well. The ageing population in the prison system across Australia is rapidly growing, and we need to have proper facilities to look after those people.

The most important part is that what was left to us as a government was a failure to have enough beds in disciplinary units to deal with violent, out-of-control prisoners, those gangsters and criminals who stand over other prisoners. There were simply not enough beds in the system to allow us to actually separate them off and incarcerate them somewhere else, and change their behaviour. That is the basis of the supermax. The supermax will have 40 beds. Twenty of those beds will be effectively isolation. They will not be allowed to mix with the other prisoners. They will not be allowed to have visits. Those visits will only be via Skype from the front visitor centre. They will not be able to have their recreation. They will effectively have cages at the back of their cells in which they will have their recreation. If they change their behaviour and if they understand the discipline of prison, they can move into the other part of the prison, which is a slightly more relaxed environment—only slightly more relaxed. It will be completely isolated from the rest of the prison. Anybody who goes into the supermax will not want to be there. It will not be a place of any rehabilitation. It will not be a place of programs. It will not be a place of education. It will be a place of, "If you go there, you change your behaviour or you'll remain there until you learn that."

The people who will be incarcerated in there will be those who are an extreme threat to the state's security, with offences such as terrorism-related offences, serial criminality, high-risk escapes, extreme level of threat and violence in prisons, and high-end organised crime that requires management. Those are the types of people, member for Baldivis, who will be incarcerated in this facility. It will be the only one of its kind in the whole of Australia. It has been much needed. It has been called for for many years by prison officers, and we are going to deliver. Once again, it is the McGowan government that actually not only creates jobs, but creates jobs in such a way that it delivers a good outcome for taxpayers, and rehabilitation for prisoners.

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Armadale! I call you to order for the second time. Being on that front bench there has certainly excited you today!