

PRISON SYSTEM — GOVERNMENT STRATEGIES

Motion

HON SIMON O'BRIEN (South Metropolitan) [11.30 am] — without notice: I move —

That this Council offers its encouragement to government and relevant government agencies to examine and pursue innovative strategies to reduce the number of Western Australians in the prison system.

The first responsibility of any government is to protect its citizens. In pursuit of that, the government that I support has expressed its concern in many practical ways about the current rate of juvenile offending and incarceration in our community, in particular among young Indigenous people. The government has committed to a number of initiatives and is exploring means of deterring future offending, by juveniles in particular, and it remains open to community views with regard to the best methods of achieving this objective.

That is what I want to talk about today. But, in doing so, I do not want to disregard another clear priority for this side of the house. This government has a good record, which we can point to, in making sure that we discharge the responsibility of protecting our citizens first and foremost. We have introduced mandatory sentencing for those who assault public officials in their line of duty. We have committed to mandatory sentencing for aggravated assaults. These are serious steps. We have supported the operations of the Department of Corrective Services by providing the extra resources that it needs, with an extra 673 prison officers over the past four years. We have invested heavily in prisons and in a range of other mechanisms to make our justice system work better for Western Australians, whether they are part of the justice system or depending on it for their protection.

I want to make the point at the outset that it needs to be recognised, and I do recognise, that we do need a prison system. We do need to use incarceration as a means of protecting the community by getting violent offenders off the streets, and to act as a deterrent to those who might seek to commit serious crime by offering the promise of the serious punishment that a prison term brings to those upon whom it is imposed. But sometimes we have to look beyond that. I was, therefore, very, very pleased to hear a debate commencing this week that gives me some hope to address a matter that, let us face it, has been raised many times before.

I recall the following words that have been tabled in this place —

- 1.1 Western Australia has an imprisonment rate which is over twice that of: the State of Victoria; the Netherlands; and Germany.
- 1.2 Imprisonment as a sentencing option is expensive and largely ineffective in rehabilitating offenders. In many cases imprisonment has a negative effect on both the offender and their family. On a daily per offender basis, it costs approximately 14 times more to imprison an adult or juvenile offender than to impose a community based sentence.
- 1.3 Imprisonment should be primarily for violent offenders (who constitute approximately half of all current prisoners). Non-violent offenders and those currently receiving short prison terms are best directed to community based sanctions with strict enforcement of the conditions.
- 1.4 The use of a broader range of more sophisticated alternative sanctions to imprisonment will provide more effective programs for offenders and have less disruptive effects on the families of offenders.

I am quoting from the twenty-ninth report of the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations in relation to the financial management of prisons. That report was tabled in this place on 29 June 2000. Both Hon Ljiljana Ravlich and I were members and co-authors of that report, prepared under the chairmanship of Hon Mark Nevill.

I do not know that anyone in this place would seriously disagree with the sentiments that are contained in that report or would particularly wish to take issue with the general thrust of those sentiments. It might be interesting to dust off that report and look at it in the light of current experience. Maybe some committee or other might take up the role, or, indeed, maybe a government agency listening to this debate might want to dust off that report and have a look at it and compare and contrast it with the progress that has been made over the years in this area.

Basically, we know these things. We know that there are people who do need to be locked up for society's simple protection, because they need to be taken out of circulation for a period of time. But we also know, I think intuitively, that we can do things better. I say that particularly in light of the rate of imprisonment in Western Australia. I am advised by the annual report of the Department of Corrective Services that as at 30 June last year, we had just under 5 000 people in our jails. We have to ask, "Hang on. Why is it the case that we are imprisoning people at such a rate? Is it achieving all that we want it to achieve? Are there people in our prisons who probably should not be there, or in respect of which it is pointless to have them there?"

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The report that I have referred to—the twenty-ninth report of that old committee—canvasses questions such as the mental health of people who are in the prison system. It also canvasses the nature of the offences that they are in prison for, such as whether they are in prison for petty offences but could not pay their fines, or whether they are in prison for driving offences and so on. We could realistically ask ourselves whether there is a better alternative for these types of offences than the alternative of imprisonment. Although I know that members are unlikely to dismiss me as some sort of bleeding heart, I hold these views very sincerely. There is no point in the community going to great expense and making things worse for itself in the case of offenders who perhaps are not destined to be lifetime offenders. I am sure there are better things that we in the community can do with our money and our energy. There is also no point in the community making things worse for the families and others who rely on those offenders, and of overlooking the contribution that those people and their families might otherwise be able to make.

I think, again, that members would appreciate the point that I am making and generally would agree that these are fair questions to ask; and, indeed, they are being asked. All sorts of people, both within and outside of government, are doing research into these matters. I have no doubt that there are many officers in the Department of Corrective Services, in the Department of the Attorney General, and in a whole suite of government and non-government organisations, who are similarly exercising their minds and their consciences about these questions and are in search of a better outcome.

The report that Hon Ljiljana Ravlich and I helped co-author back in 2000 states at paragraph 1.10 —

The gap between research and practice needs to be bridged.

I imagine that that was not only true then but it is also true now. It was true five years ago and it will probably be true in another five years as well.

Hon Ljiljana Ravlich: If we co-authored it, it will be true forever.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Absolutely. We also made some recommendations which, in view of my subsequent life experience, we might have finetuned slightly. Nonetheless, these are important —

Hon Sue Ellery: Read those ones out.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Time prohibits me from doing that.

With all of that in mind, I was greatly encouraged when I saw the new Minister for Corrective Services, Hon Joe Francis, make some remarks that show a mindset about bridging that gap and about doing something and making a difference. I want to compliment him on that. One way that I can do that is by encouraging some debate and awareness in this place and by my colleagues here having a look, if they are of a mind to do so, at our prison system.

On 8 May in the other place, a member asked the minister a question which, in part, stated —

Last week the minister said that every dollar spent keeping someone out of jail is better than \$10 spent keeping them in jail.

- (1) What is the minister's intention in relation to the prison population in Western Australia—to increase or decrease it, noting all the minister's other commentary on the subject?

In part, Minister Francis replied —

One of the things that has obviously come to my attention is the fact that perhaps in some circumstances it may be better to spend a little bit more to put a few more resources into stopping some juveniles, in particular, from crossing that line that will land them in jail. This government obviously has a very strong record on protecting the community—on locking up people who are a threat to the innocent people of Western Australia—and I will not, and I am sure the government will not, apologise for that stand. But I also think that we can do a little bit more to spend some money in helping to keep some of the at-risk juveniles, in particular, from crossing the line that will land them in jail in the first place. It is not one of those areas in which if we just had millions of dollars and could throw \$1 million at every single person in Western Australia, we would stop people from committing crimes. We are still going to have people in jail. What I am suggesting is that perhaps we should spend a bit more money and put a few more resources into trying to stop people going down that wrong path that will land them in jail, which will just create a waste of human capital by locking them up. If we can keep them from committing crimes in the first place, that will provide a better outcome for them, for the individuals who will not be the victims of the crime and for the taxpayers, because at the moment it costs somewhere around \$630 a day to keep a juvenile in detention in Western Australia.

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I was greatly encouraged when I heard these sentiments being publicly expressed because people will take issue with the minister about that and people will be offended. People are easily offended in this town when they see their situation or the established norm being threatened but these are the sorts of things that a minister needs to say. I congratulate him for it.

Others, including myself, on that estimates committee of yesteryear have looked at these things as well. In researching this matter, I was very pleased to see that the Department of Corrective Services already knows about this. An extensive number of programs are conducted by, and largely within, our custodial facilities. I applaud corrective services officers for the very, very difficult job that they have to do. I want to decrease the workload they have. I want to have fewer people in custody and fewer lives disrupted permanently by incarceration when they do not necessarily need to be. That is why I will be pursuing support of alternative programs for early intervention. I make that pledge. I alluded to this when I spoke in this house on Tuesday about some goings-on in Fremantle. I hope that by raising this matter today, it gives members an opportunity to start thinking about it themselves and also to offer some encouragement to a minister who is determined to make a difference.

HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Leader of the Opposition) [11.45 am]: I am absolutely delighted to speak to this motion today. I am really pleased that a change in circumstance has led Hon Simon O'Brien to recognise and acknowledge the work and policies of WA Labor and, in particular, the work done by Paul Papalia, the member for Warnbro, back in 2010 when he released Labor's discussion paper on justice reinvestment. I am happy to support any motion that encourages the government to look at innovative strategies to reduce the number of Western Australians in the prison system. However, two things make me wary and a little sceptical about the likelihood of success but I hope that those things can be turned around. Firstly, and most recently, was the shocking sacking of a senior loyal public servant, the head of the Department of Corrective Services, in unusual circumstances in the past couple of weeks. This is the man who we would think would be best placed to advise the government on how to address this issue based on his years of experience. The second thing that makes me slightly sceptical about the likelihood of success is that those programs that encourage tackling recidivism and, in particular, those programs directed at young people in the juvenile justice system have been cut significantly by this government in recent budgets. A series of programs—I will name them in a minute—have been cut. A really good sign of this government's bona fides is that it has genuinely recognised that we need to do something different and we need to do something to tackle young people, and Indigenous young people, in particular, to turn around the likelihood that they will end up back in corrective services. I really hope that the budget we see in August gives us a sign that funds have been returned to those programs that have been demonstrably successful in keeping young people out of our prisons.

In 2010, Paul Papalia wrote a discussion paper entitled "Justice Reinvestment—An Option for Western Australia?" The reason he chose to tackle those issues, some of which have been touched on already by Hon Simon O'Brien, is that there had been a really significant steep growth in WA's prison muster following, in particular, some changes around parole policies and practices. The Chief Justice had indicated in public debate that it was certainly the case that the prisoners who constituted the recent growth in the WA prison system displayed some general characteristics, such as psychiatric disability, economic disadvantage, evidence of an inability to pay fines, Aboriginality and offending at the lower end of the spectrum. Prisons are also costly. Paul Papalia pointed that out in his paper as well. Back in 2010, he was saying that the operating costs of our prisons already exceed half a billion dollars and that the Chief Justice and the Inspector of Custodial Services both say that this substantial figure is growing at a rate of about \$100 000 a year for each additional prisoner. It is not \$100 000 a year across the system; it is \$100 000 a year for each additional prisoner. The proposition developed in the United States in Texas and taken up elsewhere was: ought not we be able to look at how we spend the money on trying to stop people going into prison in the first place, if they are part of that group that share those characteristics outlined, for example, by the Chief Justice, and certainly on trying to stop those who have been in there once from ever having to go back in there again?

Paul Papalia's discussion paper particularly looked at the sheer weight of numbers of Indigenous people in the WA prison system, and noted that WA has the highest rate of Indigenous imprisonment in the nation. Around 43 per cent of the adult prison population and at times as much as 80 per cent of the juvenile detention population in Western Australia are Aboriginal, which is not a statistic we should be proud of. Aboriginal people are a minority in the demographic of Western Australia. They make up only 3.2 per cent of the state's population but are 20 times more likely to end up being in prison than are non-Aboriginal people.

My colleague Paul Papalia therefore posed questions around the policy that has become known around the world as justice reinvestment. It takes a scientific approach and has four steps, which have been canvassed widely in public debate since Paul put it on the public agenda nearly three years ago now. The first step—this has already been undertaken to a certain extent—is to do a geographic analysis of the state's prison population to identify which communities are generating the intake. The proposition within the justice reinvestment proposal is that the

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analysis be undertaken in a non-partisan way. However, we know that work has already been done and that there has been public canvassing of that work. Indeed, I have to say that public servants were flagging that proposition to me about a year ago. The second step is to bring people together. This is not just a problem for the Department of Corrective Services. As in the case of many social issues, this is a problem that needs to be tackled by a range of agencies and a range of organisations in the community. It is not just about corrective services; it is about health, education, child protection, Indigenous affairs, police, local government and regional development agencies. It is about all those agencies working together. The third step is to make sure the costs are done properly and to implement the changes. The fourth step is then about measuring the outcomes.

This is a time-limited debate and I want to just quickly touch on some of the programs that have worked well but from which this government in its wisdom has seen fit to cut money. They include the Killara youth support service, an outreach support program for young people and their families who are having problems that might attract the attention of the police and the law. Its funds were cut in 2012, I think. There is the award-winning crime-fighting initiative, the Family Intensive Team, which targeted juvenile offenders who had committed serious and repeat offences and whose severe antisocial behaviour increased their offence risk. That team's funds were cut in 2010. Then there is the Sycamore Tree Project, a not-for-profit program run under the umbrella of Prison Fellowship WA, which turns around people's lives and has been hailed as a tremendous success by victims of crime, by prison management and by prisoners who participate. The state government will provide no funding to that project either. I hope that these measures, together with encouragement from Hon Simon O'Brien and the rest of us in this chamber who will no doubt support the motion today, will result in some bona fides in the budget and that a genuine attempt will be made to invest funds in those programs that we know work. It is absolutely critical that we continue to invest in the pointy end of corrective services.

There are people who need to be locked up for our safety and sometimes for their own safety as well. There are people who have committed crimes that are so seriously unacceptable to the community that prison is the only solution for them. We have a system of justice that says, "If you commit an offence against the community, you will pay a price for that." But we cannot continue to just lock people up and not seriously continue to invest at a significant rate to ensure people stay out of prison; or if they do go in, they go in only once and do not keep going back. If we do not properly invest at that end of the spectrum, we are setting ourselves up for a gross failure and we are setting up people, particularly those young people in the juvenile justice system, to ruin their lives. I put it to the house that some young people's lives could have been on a much stronger, healthier path if the three programs I just referred to had been properly funded in the last four years. It is up to the government now to put its bona fides on the table and make sure we see in the budget serious funds.

HON DAVE GRILLS (Mining and Pastoral) [11.55 am]: The Chinese have a saying that it does not matter who holds the cow, it is who gets the milk. I have often thought that and it was pleasing to hear Hon Simon O'Brien's comments the other day about Fremantle and the events that took place there. It has been my experience that if we get onto a problem straightaway, then it will not happen. This is how we prevent people from ending up in jail. We need to put the community back into the police community engagement division and start seeing a bit more of a proactive approach to matters like this before they occur, thereby preventing people from coming under the gaze of the law. We should work at it from that end. We do a lot at the other end but we need to put a lot more back in.

It was good to hear the honourable Leader of the Opposition talk about how we should invest in that approach. It has long been my experience that we invest in lots of things and that we have lots of people working in different ways and in different areas trying to achieve the same thing. What we really need is a more coordinated approach and, yes, we do need to invest in that if we want to keep young people out of the corrective services system.

It was also good to hear the Minister for Mental Health say that she had sat in court and listened to the stories and things that happen in courts. That is very good and perhaps we all should take a leaf out of her book. In my experience, some people who sniff and abuse substances are denied mental health services because mental health practitioners say it is not a health issue but an issue that people have caused and brought on by substance abuse. The fact is that those people still commit offences irrespective of whether they have a mental illness or whether they have done something to themselves.

What I have proposed and have spoken to a lot of people about—I proposed it whilst in Kalgoorlie—Boulder—is the need to have a paradigm shift in the way we deal with young people. If governments are going to put money into justice reinvestment, I think we could do worse than look at a purpose-built facility that can take young people who offend, who quite rightly need to be put in a place, and work with those people. Then we could take all the existing government agencies, not-for-profits and good people mentioned today and get them to work with those young people in that facility; and, more importantly, engage their families in that process. I think that is where we need to be. I think we could do a lot worse than look perhaps at a pilot project to actually do that.

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Because we spend a lot of money doing other things that sometimes do not quite work, I think there is an opportunity there to do that.

Having sat at the other end of the scale, I can see that there is a need for crime prevention. There is an opportunity here for that. The police service has overhauled its community policing division, which now calls itself the community engagement division. That provides an opportunity for police to have a bit more of a look at what happens and to put some more effort towards engagement with the community. Closed-circuit television in some areas is seen as the be-all and end-all, but it is effective only if it is monitored. Local governments are hesitant and say that they cannot afford to monitor it and the police say that they will not monitor it all the time. I have a proposal that can fix that and it does not involve too much, just a bit of commonsense. CCTV needs to be monitored in peak periods. We need to use it to get more bang for our buck. We need to get out there and prevent the crimes. If Fremantle was covered by CCTV and we had someone monitoring that, instead of being reactive after an offence has been committed—for example, when somebody has been assaulted—we could be proactive and allocate limited resources before it becomes something that ties up resources. It has been my experience that to arrest somebody for a minor offence is not a minor event. These days, with red tape and things that happen with police officers, the arresting police officer is off the street for quite some hours by the time all the paperwork has been processed.

Hon Simon O'Brien: That is a very good point.

Hon DAVE GRILLS: Thank you. I can speak on this because it has been my experience; until 12 February, I was a serving police officer. I was the crime prevention and diversity officer in Kalgoorlie–Boulder and people came and talked to me about different things. However, I think we have missed the point. If we listen to what people tell us, we learn that parents who have kids involved in this system with siblings will say, “I cannot afford to deal with this young person because it takes my attention away from these guys, and I do not want these children to end up the same way.” People say to parents, “You should take more responsibility for your child”, but it is pretty hard to take responsibility for someone when the only tool they have in their toolbox is a hammer. Everything they see is a nail and they treat problems with that hammer. People have said to me that they have given their kids, to use their term, a flogging and locked them in their room, but they ran away. They have said to me that they do not know what else to do. That says to me that we have a problem with parents who really do not know what to do. If members go out into the communities in the lands, they will see that the taps are painted blue for cold and red for hot. This is 2013; we should be teaching people that hot is hot and cold is cold. I have limited time to talk on this, but I am quite happy to talk with anyone who cares to listen. It is something that we need to do because it not only costs the community a lot of money, but it will continue to cost the community a lot of money for a long time to come if we do not put a spoke in the wheel and increase the gap. The gap that I speak of is the gap between doing right and wrong. On a sliding scale, if we increase the gap between doing right and wrong, that gap will go somewhere else, such as Indigenous health and education, and we will close that gap.

I thank all the members who have spoken on the motion today and I hope that there is an opportunity for some bipartisan action on this. I will put my money where my mouth is and I would be happy to work with anyone who wants to make a change. As I said in my maiden speech last night, I am not a one-trick pony, but this is one of the things that I think underpins a lot of the ills of society and that we are capable of fixing it. Therefore, I put the challenge to the Council and ask members to address this issue in not only metropolitan WA but also regional WA. Regional kids end up in the metro area in places such as Banksia Hill, which takes them out of the lands and does not fix the problem. I thank Hon Simon O'Brien very much for raising this issue and Hon Sue Ellery for speaking on the motion. I hope that we will be able to come to an agreement and start to work towards better outcomes for young people in our communities.

HON GIZ WATSON (North Metropolitan) [12.04 pm]: I congratulate the honourable member for this motion. I have to say that I was somewhat surprised, to be quite honest. An issue that I have spoken about in this place for 16 years is finally getting some support across the parties. That is excellent. I am not a cynical person, as members know. Some of the comments that I will make on this motion pre-empt some of the things I will say this afternoon in my concluding comments. This is a very important area. We have got it wrong for so long in Western Australia by pursuing a bidding war on law and order. All three other political parties in this state have to remember that it was the Labor Party that introduced mandatory sentencing into Western Australia and saw juveniles imprisoned for a third-strike offence no matter the severity of the preceding offences in home burglaries.

Hon Michael Mischin: They would have been aggravated burglaries of dwellings.

Hon GIZ WATSON: No, it was not. Hon Michael Mischin might like to check the history.

Anyway, we have a situation now in Western Australia in which we have, under successive governments, imprisoned people, particularly Indigenous Western Australians, at an unprecedented rate. I really have noticed

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the change in mood and I appreciate the comments from the new Minister for Corrective Services. I think that is a beacon of hope in this area. If we look at the evidence, we see that many young offenders, particularly young men, take risks and do foolish things as they are growing up and some of them come in contact with the justice system because of that. The difference in where their lives go after that is determined by whether they end up in prison, do not get caught or get into in a diversionary program. If we look at exactly the same sort of offending behaviour of young men, those who did not get caught go on to have fulfilling, useful, noncontroversial lives. Often one set of circumstances leads them down a different track and they end up, through a series of further events, ruining their prospects of a good productive life. When young people enter the prison system, they come out more likely to reoffend after having learned a lot of behavioural and other useful information from other people in prison—older offenders. The rate of recidivism is very high for young offenders and particularly for Aboriginal offenders. We desperately need an evidence-based approach in this area.

Over many years, I have worked with many academics in Western Australia who have the research and the information. I encourage all members, particularly the Minister for Corrective Services and the Minister for Police, to pay heed to some of that research. I am thinking of people such as Professor Neil Morgan, the current Inspector of Custodial Services; Professor Richard Harding, the former Inspector of Custodial Services; and Associate Professor David Indermaur to name a few. They are well-regarded academics in this area. Also, members should listen to some of the comments that come from the judiciary, who have a significant role in the justice system and who have said some very important things about a different approach that we can take in this state. I was absolutely delighted when the Labor Party undertook to look seriously at justice reinvestment. Again, that is an issue that I have been pursuing for many, many years. It is an evidence-based approach that argues that the money spent in preventing people going to prison will ultimately save the whole economy a significant amount of money. That is not the only motivation, of course, but it is a significant one. Conservative states in the United States such as Texas and Florida have proven that this is a way of taking off the extraordinary pressure on the budget from continued incarceration.

I particularly note one area in which a lot of work is needed and that is women in prison in Western Australia. We have a gross overcrowding in Bandyup Women's Prison that continues. The majority of women in prison in Western Australia are in fact there for crimes of poverty such as social security fraud, which are basically non-violent crimes. We desperately need systems to ensure that people do not commit these crimes in the first place and that they get better assistance, whether that is financial counselling or life skills training, to prevent them making that fatal mistake that will lead them down the track, ultimately, to prison.

There are some excellent examples of diversionary programs in Western Australia that have been working and need greater funding and support. I am thinking in particular of the initiative through the Drug Court, which has done an excellent job in steering drug affected people out of the prison system and into turning their lives around and getting off their addictions. Juvenile justice teams have done great work in this state as have a number of initiatives from the Aboriginal communities to deal with their own young offenders within their communities. Often that is what is needed. In this area we have to think what factors will appeal to young people in particular, and again I mention young men because they are overrepresented in this contact with the justice system. Who do they listen to; who do they actually respect? Some of the senior elders within their community are the people they might listen to to make different choices.

If we are going to really tackle this issue, and I would be delighted to be part of continuing to do so from outside of the Parliament as I have from within, we also have to tackle the role that the interaction between the Parliament, the politicians and the media plays in this area. There are a few excellent journalists, and I know Amanda Banks in particular will write a good thoughtful piece about how justice operates. She challenges us to think outside the very simplistic model. In the climate of people saying that we need to be safe and that we need to keep people locked up, we know that most people will have been responding to this bidding war on law and order. It is the responsibility of us all to say that that has to end now, because it is not achieving the outcome that it claims it will achieve—that is, reducing offending and ensuring that there are fewer victims of crime. We have to really turn this whole argument around.

A final comment I make about our community and why I think there is a high rate of resorting to violent behaviour, which often leads to imprisonment, is that we are awash with violence. We cannot turn on the television at night without seeing about 10 different police shows, scenes of violence that children are exposed to from as soon as they can watch television, which is probably about three years old. We do not have a culture that says that this violence is not entertainment. It just gets inculcated into everybody's view of the world and it is a really profound problem. It also goes to the fact that within our schools we do not teach enough young people how to resolve conflicts in a way that is respectful and non-violent. Until we do that, children and young people will continue to ape what they see in all the materials that they absorb. With violent police shows and all sorts of examples like that, it is inevitable that young people act that violence out.

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HON PHIL EDMAN (South Metropolitan) [12.15 pm]: I will talk a bit about some intervention programs. It will not be the first time I have spoken about them in this house. They are the Right to Write and the Weld to Life programs, which are held at my local police and community youth centre.

Before I get into that, I was very interested to read an opinion piece by the Commissioner of Police on page 20 of *The West Australian* on 13 May entitled “Why more police does not mean less crime”. It was very interesting to read. It states —

For my sins I occasionally have to read Hansard when there are matters pertaining to police in parliamentary debate.

Everyone who talks today please remember that the Commissioner of Police will read it, which is very good to know!

I would like to quote the piece further and talk about it. It continues —

As a community we can “vaccinate” to reduce the circumstances which drive the risks and vulnerabilities leading to juvenile offending or we can continue to believe that chasing and prosecuting juvenile offenders is the best strategy for change.

What follows is simply fact and not a value judgment. Areas of Perth which have the greatest concentrations of all these factors together include Balga (and immediately surrounding suburbs), Armadale, Maddington, Thornlie, Kwinana and Rockingham.

So we do have some problems down there, but we are getting better at fixing them. I will quickly go over again how the how the Right to Write program started. We had a massive problem in that area with graffiti, and the graffiti was all about tagging. There were certain gangs and the graffiti was about tagging. They would tag a certain area and that would also be the area where, most of the time, day burglaries occurred. There was the issue of graffiti, but also the issue of burglaries. The Right to Write program was started to deal with the youths who had been charged for offences of creating graffiti. The Weld to Life was started to give these youths, mainly prolific priority offenders and youth at risk, the opportunity to have a skill and learn how to weld. Hopefully, they would then go on to get an apprenticeship or get on with their lives and get a job, which is a lot better than continuing in the way they were, either ending up in a detention facility, continuing to break the law and not getting caught or in some cases suicide. These programs still run today, even though I have been speaking about them since 2009. They are still supported by the government. The juvenile justice team does a fantastic job as well and it is doing quite well. It was very pleasing to also read in *The West Australian* an article entitled “State to lift crime prevention spending”. Our new Minister for Corrective Services, Joe Francis, is actually considering increasing the amount of money going to these intervention programs. I look forward to hearing about that when he decides what he will do. I was also surprised to learn recently that it costs some \$660 a day to keep a juvenile in detention. That is a lot of money. I do not know if anyone has a calculator so they can work out how much that is a year.

Hon Simon O'Brien: A quarter of a million.

Hon PHIL EDMAN: Good on you, Hon Simon O'Brien, thank you.

One thing I have said constantly during debate in this house is that I spoke to the police commissioner when he went to the PCYC to have a look at the programs. He is often quoted in the paper as having something to say about the way forward in relation to crime. I want to be on record saying—I hope the police commissioner reads *Hansard* again—that he needs to support and replicate these programs in other trouble spots in Western Australia. Why? Both the Right to Write program and the Weld to Life program have an 85 per cent success rate. If anyone on either side of the house has any better statistics on a program for rehabilitating prolific priority offenders or youth at risk, I would love to hear about it. I am very proud of those programs because they occur just in my backyard and I believe they actually work and they provide the opportunity to teach these youths skills. In my opinion all these problems start at home with parents who do not seem to give their kids any love. Some of the kids grow up with huge problems with domestic violence with mum and dad.

There are parents who abuse substances such as drugs and alcohol. We can imagine what it is like for people who are trying to bring up children in that environment and what the replications can be. I am not trying to make an excuse for why we have prolific and priority offenders or youth at risk, but in my opinion, that is where it comes from. The wheel just keeps spinning. When those kids grow up into adults they commit crime, then all of a sudden they meet a lovely partner and have a child, and the process just repeats itself. These programs are like putting a spoke in the wheel to stop that. They are working. I commend our government for considering increasing money to these intervention programs, but I also again ask the police commissioner to seriously think about replicating these programs. When I spoke to him he said that the first one should perhaps be in the Pilbara, because we have some problems up there with Aboriginal youth. Once again, I am more than happy to help with

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and facilitate anything that is needed. If anybody in this house would like to come down to the PCYC in Rockingham to have a look at these fabulous rehabilitation programs, it would be my pleasure to facilitate and look after that.

HON ALYSSA HAYDEN (East Metropolitan — Parliamentary Secretary) [12.21 pm]: First of all I would like to congratulate Hon Simon O'Brien for bringing this motion to the house. Also, hooray and congratulations to our minister for taking a fresh look at ways to reduce the number of juveniles going into our prison system. It is all very easy to say that our prisons are getting busier and that we should build another one, but we all know how costly they are and how much it costs to run facilities such as these. Instead of just asking the government to build more prisons and to put more people away, maybe tackling the problem at the beginning, especially with our youth, is far more important. Hon Phil Edman last year raised a similar issue during private members' business. I think this motion has a great connection with that previous debate. The minister is obviously simply looking at ways in which we can assist the resources that are already out there to protect our juveniles and to help our young people, in order to help prevent them from going into a life of crime.

All members of this house are very lucky. I assume that we all had a fantastic upbringing and strong families. My dad was a work-at-home dad. He was involved in my life 99 per cent. I was very lucky to have him coach my netball and softball teams. At the time as a child I did not think I was lucky because I had my dad everywhere I went, but he actually gave me guidance, strength and support as I grew up. There were obviously other females in my netball team. They did not have the same family support that I had, but lucky for them, my dad was prepared to share his support. Quite often he would go around and pick up kids on the way to netball training or netball games. Those children did not have parents who came along and supported them by watching them play their sport, or by providing a uniform or a simple bottle of water. I often think that if those children did not have my father to support them, would they have been included in sport on the weekend? Sport gives people a connection to community and encourages them to be a team player. It also gives people a chance to be part of something outside of their home. Those children would have been far worse off if they had not had that opportunity. I believe that is what we are lacking in our community.

It is not just the state government or local government that needs to step up and help our youth at risk; it has to be our community at large. It needs to start in places like our police and community youth centres. Last time we spoke about PCYCs in this house I said how fantastic it is, and how proud I am, of our Midland PCYC. It has a fantastic initiative called the Northbridge diversion program, which is designed for youth at risk. Instead of them hopping on a train from Midland into Northbridge and bringing down our nightlife, these children, who are generally aged between 10 and 18, are now being diverted to the PCYC, where they are actually given a nice hot, healthy meal, which most of these children do not get at home, and also they can undertake sporting, arts and craft and leadership activities. It is giving them somewhere dry and safe to go at night-time, as opposed to hopping on a train and heading into Northbridge and getting into trouble. I believe there is a fine line between whether our youth will go and commit crime or would rather be somewhere that is safer. I honestly believe that most of our juveniles would rather be in a safe environment. We need to give them the opportunity to go to that safe environment. If they have somewhere to go, they are not led on their merry way by other juveniles, who may have already entered our criminal system and have come back out. As we all know, young people are open to peer pressure. If they have somewhere else to go, they are not open to that same old rhetoric, night in and night out, of not wanting to be at home because they do not have a safe home environment and prefer to be out on the streets because they think it is safer. It is sad that we, as a community, are not there to help them. As other colleagues have said, and as our new member mentioned today, our PCYCs play a huge part in helping our youth at risk. I hope that our minister, when he looks at the data to work out where our resources can be best put, actually takes on board the PCYCs and their activities, and increases them. Things like the Northbridge diversion program can be and should be reproduced in all other areas throughout our metropolitan region.

Another program that works really well is midnight basketball, which is run very successfully in Midland and also out at Mirrabooka. Thursday nights at Mirrabooka Square Shopping Centre are normally known as fight night, because that is where the young people all go and cause a bit of trouble. When the midnight basketball program was introduced, fight night turned into basketball night and it was a huge success. All the shopkeepers at the shopping centre enjoyed increased business, because for once customers were able to shop in a safer environment. The minute the midnight basketball finished in Mirrabooka, fight night started up again. That proved right there and then that if young people are given a choice to do something fun, they would rather do that than something that is causing trouble. I know that midnight basketball is continuing in Midland and I hope that it will continue in Mirrabooka. I will work closely with our east metropolitan police to make sure that happens. I am a big fan and a huge supporter of their activities.

In closing, as I said, not all our youth have been able to have the fantastic upbringing that most of us have enjoyed. I commend the minister for wanting to look at this and to invest money into an area that we, as a state government, local governments and all portfolios across government, including mental health and sport and

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recreation, need to be involved in, because we owe it to our community and our young people to make sure that they stay safe and have an option.

HON SIMON O'BRIEN (South Metropolitan) [12.28 pm] — in reply: I would like to thank members for their very positive and thoughtful contributions. Already we are teasing out some worthwhile ways ahead. Hon Dave Grills reminded me that one of the impediments to police getting out and doing community policing is that we saddle them with all the paperwork requirements, which takes them away from doing the things that they need to do. There is a lot more, too, that we need to explore. Hopefully, we are now approaching a point in time when we will once again have a real and genuine exploration of the opportunities that we have.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.