

EASTERN GOLDFIELDS REGIONAL PRISON

**730. Dr G.G. JACOBS to the Minister for Corrective Services:**

Can the minister please outline to the house what he is doing to ensure that the local community benefits from the Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison development, which is in my electorate, and how recruitment is progressing for the prison?

**Mr J.M. FRANCIS replied:**

I will start by saying that I read an opinion piece in *The Sunday Times* about a week and a half ago by Tom Percy, QC, in which he reflected on his recent visits to the Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison. He wrote about how it is a dark and depressing kind of place. Of course, prisons are not exactly places that people want to visit. He was absolutely right in his comments, but he failed to point out that people cannot go to the Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison without noticing the major works going on in developing the new Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison at the same location. I think it is timely that we reflect on how that is going. It is going swimmingly well for a prison construction. It is on time and on budget. This new prison will provide an additional 250 beds for both male and female prisoners in the eastern goldfields near Kalgoorlie. It is expected that the new development will employ an extra 150 personnel in the Department of Corrective Services, 100 of whom will be both prison officers and vocational support officers.

It is important that the government and the Department of Corrective Services try to recruit as many people as possible from the towns in regional Western Australia that they come from to where they will work. The current recruitment campaign for the Department of Corrective Services, which is employing an unprecedented number of new prison officers, is specifically targeted at potential prison officers in the Kalgoorlie region. We want to create jobs in our facilities for the people in that region. For the first time in history, unless someone knows better, we are running a prison officer recruitment class—a school for prison officers—in regional Western Australia. One class started a couple of weeks ago for over 20 people studying to become prison officers.

**Mr P.B. Watson:** It's been done before.

**Mr J.M. FRANCIS:** It has not been done for some time.

**The SPEAKER:** Thank you for that bit of wisdom, member for Albany. Minister, can you carry on.

**Mr J.M. FRANCIS:** I did say that I might be corrected on this. I do not think it has been done for some time. We are running courses for prison officers in regional Western Australia. As I said, one is running right now for prison officers in the regional prison in the eastern goldfields. We expect this prison to create an extra 140 to 150 jobs for the people of that region. We are trying to ensure that as many local businesses as possible are involved in the construction, operation and supply of everything from toilet paper through to personnel for that prison when it is up and running. We wholeheartedly support the principle of local content and the Buy Local policy of the government and the Premier. We are trying to ensure that as much as possible can be delivered by the region to that prison.

As I said, this is a wonderful development as far as prisons go. The really important point to be made—I will close on this—is that it will provide a very sensitive and realistic place for Indigenous Western Australians to spend their time. When they unfortunately spend their time in custody, they can spend it in country, which goes a long way towards their rehabilitation.