

YOUNG OFFENDERS — SUPERVISED RELEASE

**917. Mr M.H. TAYLOR to the Minister for Corrective Services:**

Can the minister provide the house with details of the initiative that is helping young offenders who do not have a safe place to stay after being released from detention?

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

I thank the member for Bateman for his question on such an important issue. As was highlighted in the Supervised Release Review Board's annual report, about 20 per cent of young offenders in custody, unfortunately, for a number of different reasons cannot be released on supervision because they have no place to go because they come from dysfunctional families, they have absent parents who cannot be found, they do not have a suitable guardian or their families are rife with domestic violence or sexual abuse. That makes for difficult situations for the Supervised Release Review Board, which is similar to a parole board for juveniles, and that is why we have come up with a way to address the issue.

It is only fair that all young kids are treated equally whether or not they have a functional family to go to. It is only fair that we try to set them up for success when they are released, rather than keeping them until their last possible day at the expiration of their sentence. Without transition supports, training and education in the real world, they are almost destined and doomed to go back into the judicial system. Certainly, I do not think it is fair to send them back to a dysfunctional family because we can be guaranteed that they will be back in front of a judge again. That is why the initiative to set up the accommodation program at Driscoll Drive near Hakea Prison—we call it the youth transitional accommodation program—is so important. The same requirements will apply to these kids as would apply to kids who would otherwise be released on supervision orders, whether that be drug and alcohol testing, curfews, attendance or education. Regardless of what the requirements are, they will be managed in a large degree similar to the way that Child Protection runs its program; that is, they will have two full-time staff and all the support that they need. Obviously, if they break the conditions of their supervised release order, just as if they were released into family care, they will be back in front of Justice Murray and the Supervised Release Review Board.

It is important that we realise that this is the right thing to do; it is not about money or the costs. This is morally the right thing to do, but it will without doubt be a little bit cheaper. It costs about \$1 million to keep five to seven kids a year. That seems like a lot, but when we weigh in the fact that there is a minimum of two staff 24/7, it is far cheaper than keeping them in custody at Banksia Hill Detention Centre. Certainly if we can reduce the reoffending rate, that means fewer victims, less crime and it also means long-term savings for taxpayers if some of those kids do not go back into the justice system.

I take this opportunity to thank the Youth Justice Board and Justice Murray for their support. The Youth Justice Board is a government board whose members do not get paid; rather, they do these things out of the goodness of their heart because they want to make a real difference to the lives of significantly troubled young people. I think it is worth noting the contribution they make. I thank them for their support.