

CORRECTIVE SERVICES — YOUNG ADULTS FACILITY, MURDOCH

59. Mr J.M. FRANCIS to the Minister for Corrective Services:

Minister, it has come to my attention that, along with other pieces of junk mail, some people in my electorate and in the electorate of the member for Riverton have received an open letter to the Premier and to the Attorney General relating to the young adults facility that is soon to open in Murdoch. Can the minister please explain to the house whether there is any substance to the claims made in this letter and what the government is doing to continue our strong focus on law and order?

Mr D.T. REDMAN replied:

I thank the member for Jandakot for the question.

He is quite right in saying that an open letter has been sent to a number of people in his electorate and others; at best, the letter is misleading. I think it is important to highlight the things that are misleading, and to highlight for the community that in fact we do not want to see these sorts of things out there in the community raising a level of angst and stirring up a level of fear in the community when in fact that should not be the case.

Mr F.M. Logan: The letter was sent to the Attorney General.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: As it relates to Corrective Services, shadow minister, I think it is appropriate that the corrective services minister responds.

Just to cite a couple of the points, I will read from the letter. The letter is about the young adults facility, which is the facility that is going in. It will have 80 beds, and it will have specialist provision for 18 to 24-year-olds who may have had a little misdemeanour that, sadly, has resulted in them receiving a term of imprisonment. It is a chance to put a specialist focus on their rehabilitation to enable their transition back into the community. This is something very, very different; it is something Western Australia is doing, and I think it is something we should be rightly very proud of. The letter states —

Originally this facility was planned for young non-violent offenders, but without talking to the community, the government has changed it to a fully-fledged prison where teenagers will mix with experienced prisoners up to 24 years old.

Mr F.M. Logan: That is true.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: No, it is not—no!

Mr F.M. Logan: That is true; your previous government —

The SPEAKER: Member for Cockburn!

Mr F.M. Logan: There was never going to be a prison!

The SPEAKER: Member for Cockburn, I formally call you to order for the first time today.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: This facility is going to have a very specialist focus, and it is going to take a different approach to dealing with those who sadly finish up in prison, and hopefully help those young people—which is a cohort that is quite highly represented within our prison system—focus on education, programs and transitioning back into the community. I think it is misleading to stir up the community —

Mr F.M. Logan: Tell them how it's going to be a prison.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: At the end of the day it is a prison, because these people will be prisoners.

Mr F.M. Logan: That's right!

Mr D.T. REDMAN: Mr Speaker, something that holds prisoners is a prison!

The letter also went on to say that there had been escapes from facilities under their—that is, Serco's—watch. We must remember that it was the Labor Party that reinstated the contract for Serco to play a part in Acacia Prison in Western Australia. That prison has been highlighted by the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services as one of the best-run prisons in the state. I assume that the opposition is saying that it does not support the letter from the union. Is that the case?

Mr F.M. Logan: I haven't read it.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: The member has not read it. When it is signed by the secretary of the Prison Officers Union and secretary of the Community and Public Sector Union—Civil Service Association of WA, one would think that it carries the support of the Labor Party.

Several members interjected.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: Is that a bad assumption? That is the wrong assumption?

This highlights —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: I do not want to keep getting to my feet, members. I would like to hear the minister, and other people in this place would like to hear the minister.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: This letter, at best, tries to —

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Warnbro, I formally call you to order for the first time today.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: This letter, at best, tries to misinform the community about the intention of the new young adults' facility, which is a very innovative idea that has been put in place in Western Australia. It is unique and targeted. The letter highlights that by doing this, we will in some way threaten the community. This is a very specific group of people who are highly represented within the prison community. We are focused on how we will respond to that, and to say that we are not able to protect the community is an absolute furphy. The focus here is on privatisation, something that the Labor Party did when it was in government. We have no notion of privatising everything in sight across the prison system; in fact, the two regional prisons that have been built will be managed within the public system by the Department of Corrective Services. Yes, this will be run by Serco, but that is something that is not entirely foreign to the opposition.