

KARNET PRISON FARM — FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Statement by Minister for Corrective Services

MR J.M. FRANCIS (Jandakot — Minister for Corrective Services) [9.03 am]: I rise to inform the house that on Friday, 12 April 2013 I had the pleasure of attending the fiftieth anniversary celebrations at Karnet Prison Farm in Serpentine–Jarrahdale, and may I say that I was delighted with what I saw. The opening of Karnet on 29 March 1963 was a significant step forward in corrective services and signalled a shift in emphasis from punishment to rehabilitation. Karnet recognised that the needs of convicted alcoholics and young first-time offenders were different from those of other prisoners, and for the first time recognised the importance of giving offenders the chance to make amends and to rehabilitate to maximise their chances of successful reintegration into the community.

Since the early days, when manual labour was key to Karnet’s development, basic education and health services have now been replaced by a sophisticated raft of programs. Today’s prisoners have access to individually tailored medical, psychiatric, educational, vocational and life-skills training programs. I am told that 14 prisoners at Karnet Prison Farm are undertaking tertiary studies, while others are completing one or more traineeships from an impressive list of 24 available traineeships at Karnet; from certificates in conservation and land management to those in bread making and fine furniture production. Additionally, Karnet offenders can complete TAFE courses focusing on literacy, numeracy and computer skills.

I must make mention of Karnet’s impact towards the self-sustainability of the entire Western Australian prison system. Already this financial year the Karnet primary industries, which include the abattoir, bakery, dairy, poultry, farm operations, garden and vegetable preparation, have produced a notional value of more than \$5 million in produce, or about 66 per cent of the prison system’s primary production for this financial year. Equally impressive is the registered herd of Holstein dairy cows that supply 1.2 million litres of milk to the prison system each year. In addition, the fruit and vegetable production, the bakery and kitchens and the industry workshops all continue to contribute to making cost savings for the department. However, although the industries are saving money, they are also providing invaluable training to offenders, giving them life and employment skills that will serve them well upon their release.

Over the past 50 years Karnet has maintained an impressive positive relationship with the community. I would like to acknowledge the Bureau of Meteorology, local schools, the Shire of Serpentine–Jarrahdale and the Jarrahdale Heritage Society as invaluable partners in many projects in the area. I must also extend my thanks to the Department of Environment and Conservation and Western Australia Police for their support over the years, and to the business partners—Alcoa, Bis Industries, IGA and Bendigo Community Bank—whose generous financial sponsorship has assisted in making Karnet what it is today for the benefit of prisoners, their families and the community. Lastly, I would like to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of all the contributors to Karnet Prison Farm over the past 50 years for making Karnet the facility it is today—an impressive jewel in the crown of the Western Australian prison system.