

SEX OFFENDERS — GLOBAL POSITIONING SYSTEM TRACKING

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

I am very proud to be part of a government that takes its responsibility to protect the community seriously; and, as such, I ask the minister whether he could please outline the latest measure introduced by the Liberal–National government to make the community safer.

Mr D.T. REDMAN replied:

I thank the member for Jandakot for the question. I also highlight that the announcement that I made on Sunday was the position that the member for Jandakot took the time to bring to me some time ago. It is very pleasing that the backbenchers in the Liberal–National government are extremely valued, and the government responded to their input to policy. The announcement was for an investment of \$6 million to introduce satellite technology—notably GPS tracking—to support the directions of courts in putting conditions on the release of dangerous sex offenders into the community. This is all about community safety. If the technology is available, it is certainly incumbent upon governments to use that technology to enhance the level of community safety. This technology means that dangerous sex offenders who are released from prison at the direction of a court will have a range of conditions attached to their release. A device will be physically attached to them so that the people who monitor this can track them 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. It will allow the authorities to pinpoint the location of the offenders at any time of the day. It will also allow the authorities to put exclusion zones around areas that are deemed not appropriate for such people to be in. A clear example of that is schools, but also, in some cases, areas that victims may attend on a frequent basis. This means that we will be able to very closely monitor their movements as an enhancement to the very strict controls in place now to control and monitor the movement of dangerous sex offenders within the community. Presently, there are 16 dangerous sex offenders within the community. This is significantly better than the current perimeter-type electronic monitoring for other types of offenders under some conditions whereby they are contained within their house and if they move outside that perimeter, the alarm goes off. But that arrangement does not allow us to track their movements once they are in breach of the perimeter. I think only one sex offender has a condition under which they are confined to a particular perimeter. I must highlight that this is not a silver bullet in terms of the response, but it will enhance the capacity to monitor the movement of dangerous sex offenders within the community.

Dr A.D. Buti: Are they the only people who will be monitored?

Mr D.T. REDMAN: The member makes a really good point.

The SPEAKER: Member for Armadale, you are not answering the question. I formally call you to order for the first time today.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: I might highlight that to get this to happen will require a legislative change, and I hope this gets the support of the opposition. I noted the comments of the shadow minister the other day and I take from those comments that there is notional support. I will be very pleased to see that when this comes into the house there is a chance that it will get the support of the opposition. Of course the technology will now be subject to a tender process to ensure that we go out to the market to see the exact technology that will apply. Our aim is to get this up and running for the start of next year, and the support of the opposition will help us get to that position. I might highlight, in response to the point that the member for Armadale made, that the first group we have chosen to apply this technology to is dangerous sex offenders. We believe, once we get to a point of actually having a look at how it works, and the challenges with it and so on, that there is a case to apply it to other groups, such as serial arsonists, again as an enhancement to make sure that the community is safe from a range of risks that are out there. There is some scope for expansion, but we need to work very, very carefully through that to ensure that once we have this up and running, once we review it, once we have a look at it, that it is actually suitable to apply to those circumstances.

This is a milestone for this government. I thank the member for Jandakot for taking up the issue with me—and again note the support that we have been able to give, once again, to make the Western Australian community safe.