

**Division 76: Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services, \$3 490 000 —**

Mr P. Abetz, Chairman.

Mr J.M. Francis, Minister for Corrective Services.

Mr A.J. Harvey, Deputy Inspector of Custodial Services.

Mr D. Summers, Manager Corporate Services.

Ms R. Davis, Principal Audit and Research Officer.

[Witnesses introduced.]

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** I refer to spending changes and the entry that refers to the Banksia Hill detention inquiry. In the context of the inquiry, which the inspector's office conducted, is further work being conducted by the inspector's office on contingency plans when there are emergencies at corrective institutions?

**Mr J.M. FRANCIS:** As the member knows, this section is obviously for the Inspector of Custodial Services, an independent inspector who reports to the Parliament. I will have to defer most of the questions to staff from the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services. I am hinting at this for the record. The member mentioned Banksia Hill. I have asked the Inspector of Custodial Services to, effectively, keep a watching brief on the transfer of juveniles from Hakea to Banksia Hill and to alert me of any concerns he has in that process. To answer the member's question, I defer to the deputy inspector.

**Mr A.J. Harvey:** It is not in the forward work program per se, but will be included as part of the regular inspection programs for the prisons. Given our concern over the issue at Banksia, it is certainly something we are aware of.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** I refer to page 893 "Relationship to Government Goals" and the table on that page containing the headings "Government Goal" and "Desired Outcome" under which is the following —

The Parliament, Minister and other stakeholders are informed on the performance of custodial services.

I ask the same question that I have asked every previous year; that is, one of the desired outcomes of the Office of Custodial Services is to be funded to undertake not just inquiries such as the one into Banksia Hill but forms of inquiry other than simply a report on each prison. The office would like the funding so it can do independent analyses of outcomes. I am saying that the goal of the minister's government is that Parliament, ministers and stakeholders be informed of the performance of custodial services. Primarily, the work of the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services is to review the performance and outcomes of each prison. It provides a report on that to the minister and Parliament on a regular basis. The office has called on the various ministers for further funding to enable it to take a more holistic view of the issues surrounding custodial services as a whole. It may well be about juveniles, adults or, for example, how we manage custodial services in the goldfields, even though a prison is being built there. It has always sought funding to undertake that independent role, which it should be able to fund but has never received that funding. What is the minister's position on that, and will he take up the cudgel on behalf of the office to get that funding?

**Mr J.M. FRANCIS:** In my five months as minister, neither the Inspector of Custodial Services nor his officers have raised that issue with me.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** It has come up. If the minister goes back to the report, he will see it.

**Mr J.M. FRANCIS:** In my time, it has not been raised.

Obviously Banksia Hill has been a very expensive exercise, to say the least, including the directed review by then Minister Cowper. I am sure the member has looked at the detail because he has an interest in this area. The detail and broad range of information provided in that report makes it a very useful tool for government to consider. It is not about just the event that happened on 20 January or the things that led to it; it is about a range of issues. I will not single any out, but, for example, there are cultural issues within staff, and security issues. The report refers to when the inspector was there and a red light came on and no-one knew what it was—it was an emergency alarm. On the night of 20 January a particular youth custodial officer was reimbursed for losing his wallet. They know they are not meant to take tinned food, mobile phones, wallets or personal things such as keys inside the centre when they are on shifts. A number of recommendations refer to efficiencies and the possibility of looking at competitive tendering for services within the juvenile section of the Department of Corrective Services. It is a very wide-ranging report. I find exceptionally useful a whole range of recommendations that were not necessarily related directly to the incident. It is very useful information. Since then, I have asked the inspector to look at a number of incidents very quickly to give me his view of what is happening, such as why some juveniles damaged their cells at Hakea—whether it was due to excessive lockdowns or staff shortages. Obviously, I am the one accountable to the member, Parliament and the people. I

need to know what is happening within the prison system. If I have any concerns whatsoever that I am not getting accurate and timely advice from the department, I intend to ask someone else to look at it. The key person I go to is, obviously, the Inspector of Custodial Services. The short answer to the member's question is that the review tabled in Parliament two weeks ago on the Banksia Hill incident cost a significant amount of money. In answer to the question of whether there is an argument to say the reporting processes the inspector currently utilises can be expanded, I am happy to look at that.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** The minister is the third minister who has sat in the chamber at budget estimates to say that he agrees with the intent of and the request for extra funding for the Office of Custodial Services. Nobody has delivered it. It requires a minister to take hold of the issue and go before the Economic and Expenditure Reform Committee and argue the case. So far no-one has done that. I ask the minister to take up the cudgel for that office. He knows how beneficial it will be to him as minister. It needs someone to champion before Treasury the issue of that money.

**Mr J.M. FRANCIS:** It is one of those situations in which perhaps we might have to spend a little bit of money to save a bit of money. If we spend a bit of money and find we can change the way we go about doing business and it will cost less in the long run, there may be a case that makes it viable. There may be a positive case for asking for more resources for the Inspector of Custodial Services. There may be a case against it, but I undertake to at least have a look at it.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** We will see next year.

**The appropriation was recommended.**