

CORRECTIVE SERVICES — DRUG DETECTION UNIT

262. Mr P. PAPALIA to the Minister for Corrective Services:

- (1) Can the minister confirm that his government cut funding to the drug detection unit and enforced zero staffing levels almost two years ago, meaning that if officers go on leave or are sick, they are not replaced?
- (2) Can the minister also confirm that there are only three regional drug detection officers, one in each of Greenough, Bunbury and Albany, and that when these officers are sick or on leave, the prisons are completely vulnerable to drugs?
- (3) Can the minister also confirm that as a result of his government's cuts, regional prisons other than Greenough, Bunbury and Albany are visited by the drug detection unit only once a year, and sometimes only once every two years?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS replied:

- (1)–(3) The big lesson that came out of question time yesterday is that we have all learnt not to believe a single thing that the member for Warnbro says in here until we check it first. The member has zero credibility. He comes in here and waves all kinds of figures around, and we learnt yesterday not to believe a single word he says until we check his facts and his statements first, because he is always wrong.

The other thing that the member for Warnbro has absolutely no credibility on is the issue of drug detection in the Western Australian prison system. He has zero credibility. He does not care one iota about trying to address the issue of improper conduct of employees of the Department of Corrective Services, and he does not care one iota about drugs getting into prisons—absolute silence. If he cared one little bit, he would have voted for that bill two weeks ago. He has no credibility whatsoever.

When it comes to the issue of the drug detection unit in the Department of Corrective Services, let me make it perfectly clear. There are over 14 prisons in Western Australia, member for Warnbro, and there are only about 10 drug detection dogs. They work on a random basis, all over the state, all of the time. I am not going to come in here and tell the member and the public of Western Australia where they might be tomorrow, which prisons they go to and when they go there. What the member needs to know and what the public needs to know is that the dogs could be anywhere at any time. Our regime is very different from that of the former government. If people try to bring drugs into a prison in Western Australia, they may well get caught. That applies to the public as well as it applies to staff of the Department of Corrective Services.