

ACACIA PRISON

39. MR N.W. MORTON to the Minister for Corrective Services:

I read with interest over the break about the opening of the new units at Acacia Prison. Can the minister please explain how this builds on this government's measures to ensure the safety and security of the community and the efficient operation of the prison system?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS replied:

I thank the member for Forrestfield for his question and for his interest in the prison system.

Mr F.M. Logan: Did you take your dog there?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: To where?

Mr F.M. Logan: Where's that prisoner with the dog?

The SPEAKER: Member for Cockburn!

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I start by saying that one of the greatest lies perpetuated by the Labor Party in public debate is that it continues to argue, though it is not true, that the prison system is overcrowded and in crisis.

Ms M.M. Quirk: They're sleeping on the floor.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: There is not a single female prisoner in Bandyup Women's Prison sleeping on the floor. There are some rooms with double beds. In fact, this is a really interesting scenario. The Labor Party is very good at saying one thing when it is in opposition and saying something else when it is in campaign mode.

We accept that when we bring in tougher penalties, more people go to prison. In fact, when the Labor Party was in campaign mode, it also accepted that. I will just prove that point. It is amazing what comes across one's desk. The other day a Labor Party document setting out Corrective Services' aims and key lines going into the 2008 election came across my desk. It states —

KEY LINE The Carpenter Labor Government is tough on crime

Yes, right; everyone fell for that one! I want to quote one line of this document just to highlight the hypocrisy of the Labor Party on this issue. Under the heading "Investing in the Future", it states —

- The Carpenter Labor Government is expanding existing prison capacity, with new facilities and the introduction of bunk-beds as a result of our tough on crime approach.

Really! If something is so wrong with putting two beds —

Tabling of Paper

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Mr Speaker —

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I am happy to table it. I have pages of it.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The minister read from the document. I ask the minister to table it.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Absolutely. I have pages of it.

[See paper 2616].

Questions without Notice Resumed

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: The reality is that we just have to look at what happened to Acacia under Labor. In the last five years of Labor government, in 2008 the prison population grew by over 33 per cent but now it is so evil when it happens under our government. It happened under the Labor government as well. It is a reality of life when tougher penalties are brought in, when the population grows and when police get more resources and more technology —

Mr F.M. Logan interjected.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Why does the member for Cockburn not get up and ask a question about that next? I would love to take a question on that as well.

The reality is that the net result will be that more criminals will get locked up and the crime rate will go down. If members ask the Minister for Police a question about how far crime rates in the community have come down because we have been locking up more of a certain type of offender, I am sure she would be happy to oblige. The reality is that in 2008, the Labor government took 250 of the units in Acacia, a prison with a design capacity of 750, double bunked them and turned it into a 1 000-bed prison. We are increasing the population at Acacia because we have expanded it by 390-odd beds. We are investing in the prison estate. We are ensuring that the prison system grows in advance of the requirement of the prison population. We run an "almost just in time"

approach. We will not pay prison officers to stand around and guard empty cells but we have more than enough capacity to accommodate the growth in the prison system into the future.