

INSPECTOR OF CUSTODIAL SERVICES — WEST KIMBERLEY REGIONAL PRISON

395. Mr I.C. BLAYNEY to the Minister for Corrective Services:

The Inspector of Custodial Services has recently been in the media stating that he is impressed with the operations of West Kimberley Regional Prison. Can the minister please outline to the house any other initiatives that this government is delivering to reduce recidivism of Aboriginals, especially the youth in the Kimberley?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS replied:

I thank you, member for Geraldton. “Recidivism” is a difficult word. We just say “repeat offending” these days!

I start by acknowledging the wonderful team out at West Kimberley Regional Prison and the work they do and the brilliant results they are getting in helping to rehabilitate people in the Kimberley, in particular the Aboriginal people up there. It is obviously something that has been recognised by the Inspector of Custodial Services, Professor Neil Morgan, as something that is working very well. I have been there, I know that a number of members have been there to visit that facility and I think the Premier himself has been up there. As far as prisons go, it is one of the better ones when it comes to getting results.

Several members interjected.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: If members do not mind, I also acknowledge the member for Kimberley for the work she did on preparing a paper recently. Some of the recommendations in that report are being seriously considered by the Department of Corrective Services and the Youth Justice Board.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Warnbro!

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I have said a number of times that if we keep doing things the same way, we will keep getting the same results, which is exactly why we established the Youth Justice Board and gave it seed funding. That is exactly why the Youth Justice Board—I am pleased to announce—has provided, and will provide, a grant of \$220 000 a year for the next two years to the Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Cultural Centre to operate the Yiriman youth diversion program. We all know that a lot of the just under 160 juveniles out at Banksia Hill are Aboriginal kids from the Kimberley. I think it is very important that we start to target as a priority some of the issues and some of the ways we can keep them out of there. The Yiriman youth diversion program will link youth with Aboriginal elders, provide diversion treks with elders, provide a six-week caring for country program, and provide valuable work experience for young Aboriginal children, supported by Kimberley Community Alcohol and Drug Services. It will also assist young people to address their offending behaviours, and, hopefully, further reduce our incarceration rate for juvenile Aboriginals in particular from the Kimberley. The Department of Corrective Services is finalising a Kimberley corrections plan that will adopt a holistic approach to community corrections and custodial corrections in the Kimberley.

Lastly—this is the key point—a number of years ago, when I became the minister, the previous Commissioner for Corrective Services had determined that the future of Broome Regional Prison was that it would be closed. I went there and looked at it. In fact, the member for Kimberley was with me at the time and she outlined a number of concerns that she had about closing that prison. I can confirm to the house that it is the intention to keep Broome Regional Prison open. It is currently being used primarily as a remand facility. We will outline in the very near future exactly what the requirements of that facility will be, moving forward, but it is now the intention of the Department of Corrective Services to keep that facility open. I think it is very important that we help rehabilitate people as much as possible, and that includes the use of that facility. As I said, I thank the member for Kimberley for her input to that.