

INSPECTOR OF CUSTODIAL SERVICES — FEMALE PRISONS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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

I refer to the Inspector of Custodial Services report tabled this morning, which stated that female offenders guilty of violent and drug offender crimes were “significantly more likely to reoffend” after completing a treatment program in prison.

- (1) Does this confirm that despite years of spin and denial, the Barnett government has been running a crime university, making serious female offenders more likely to reoffend after they leave prison than when they entered?

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr C.J. Barnett interjected.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Has the Premier read the report?

The SPEAKER: Member for Warnbro, ask your question.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I beg your pardon, Mr Speaker; I was just responding to the interjection by the Premier, who clearly has not read the report.

- (2) Does this not also confirm the inspector’s findings tabled in another report only last week that stated women’s imprisonment is in “a state of preventable crisis”?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the member very much for the question. The first thing I point out is that the biggest thing I have learned in this place in the past year and a half is not to believe a certain thing that man says until I have walked out of here and checked it. He did it again on Tuesday night.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Victoria Park, I call you to order for the first time.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Warnbro, I call you to order for the first time.

Mrs M.H. Roberts interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Midland, I call you to order for the first time. I want this answered through the Chair.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: The member for Warnbro did it again on Tuesday night when he made off-the-cuff remarks about contractors and not following up on dangerous sex offenders and chopping off GPS tracking devices.

Several members interjected.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I walked out of here, and what do members know? What he said in here was plainly not the truth—far from it. I know that I cannot believe a single thing he says until I have walked out of here and checked it. Let me get to the report. Instead of being disingenuous, why does the member for Warnbro not refer to the press release the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services put out today that went with the report, in which he acknowledged that the minister and the department are putting more resources into rehabilitation programs across the entire state than has ever been put in before?

Let me get to the women’s estate and the specifics of the question. Firstly, the inspector’s numbers were based on a comparison between the 2008–09 figures and the 2010–11 figures; they were based on material that is four years old. I am happy to talk about what is happening in corrective services. I am happy to talk all day long about the reduction in re-offending rates in the prison system in the last couple of years. Instead of looking at 2010–11 figures, I am happy to look at what has happened in corrective services in the last 10 years and the re-offending rates of adult prisoners, male and female, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. I do so as a way to point out the member’s absolutely ridiculous proposition that we are not doing enough to stop re-offending rates in prisons in Western Australia. Firstly, it costs about \$100 000 to keep an adult —

Point of Order

Mr P. PAPALIA: I did not ask a question about imprisonment numbers for the last 10 years. I asked about a report from the independent Inspector of Custodial Services that was tabled in Parliament today that was dated

September, which is a month ago; it has been sitting on the minister's desk. Why will the minister not answer the question? Mr Speaker, I ask that he be brought back to the question.

The SPEAKER: Minister, please focus on the question.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Mr Speaker, I am answering the question, I am talking about the re-offending rate of prisoners as a result of the programs delivered to them while they are in prison, both female and male prisoners.

I am glad to point out that in the past four years the reduction in the re-offending rate of prisoners from prison to corrective services in Western Australia has decreased by 15.9 per cent, almost 16 per cent, when the national average for re-offending has gone up by over five per cent. From corrective services to corrective services within Western Australia, the re-offending rate has gone down by 14.7 per cent.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Warnbro.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: From community corrections to corrective services, the rate has gone down by 45.1 per cent in the past four years.

Point of Order

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The question was about women's prisons, and the minister is not talking about women's prisons. Mr Speaker, I ask that his answer be brought to the question.

The SPEAKER: Minister, please deal with women's prisons.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I think members might want this information, so I am happy to table the Department of Corrective Services' table titled "WA Adult Recidivism Measures—Rates of Return to Corrective Services 2014".

[See paper 2304.]

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Lastly, nine per cent of adult prisoners in Western Australia are female. When one looks at the net changes in success and failure rates—we cannot save everyone—in the female estate as a percentage of population from four to five years ago, on which the numbers in the report the member referred to are based, of course a small number will make a big difference as a percentage. I care about the overall result and the trends, and ensuring that the courses we are delivering right now at Bandyup Women's Prison and all the prisons that hold females are serving the purpose of addressing the rehabilitation of drug offending and violent behaviour, and anything else those prisoners need. All the information that I have so far for 2014 proves that to be the case.