

CUSTODIAL LEGISLATION (OFFICERS DISCIPLINE) AMENDMENT BILL 2013

Second Reading

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

MR J.M. FRANCIS (Jandakot — Minister for Corrective Services) [3.57 pm]: I am aware that I have only four minutes to keep going. I probably will not go into too much detail, but I will make this point: it is clear to every single person in Western Australia, perhaps other than the opposition, that the Department of Corrective Services is well overdue for significant reform. It is not something that has suddenly happened since the government changed at the end of 2008 or post the incident at Banksia Hill; it has gone on for decades. Let us be honest; to some degree significant demands for reform have been overlooked by all sides of politics. I have come to the view—I came to this view very early on—that it was required, and I do not shy away from that.

I go out and talk to prison officers. Most of them are brilliant people who do a lot of tough work. They turn up every day and deal with some of the most difficult people in society. A lot of them say to me, “Good on you for doing this reform because it’s well and truly overdue.”

Mr F.M. Logan: Name them!

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I have some emails here. Thank you, member for Cockburn. Here is one, and I will table it. Obviously I have deleted the name. It states —

I would like to congratulate you for your determination to rid the Prison System of the age old corruption and criminality of some members of the ... fraternity. I worked as ...

I have obviously deleted the part that would identify the person —

I found the job challenging, exhilarating and rewarding—but the biggest challenge was to counter the sabotage and malevolence directed at our programs by ... usually those in senior positions (the so-called ‘Purple Circle’). On a whim they would stride into the ... and announce that it was shutting down with no explanation given. They would regularly demean and insult ... had a particularly hard time. At the same time it was strongly suspected they would do deals with ‘heavies’ by giving them alcohol or drugs to ‘do someone over’ on the yards that they didn’t like.

This is an important sentence —

There were also many considerate and non-corrupt officers with whom I worked well and who also strongly resented their corrupt bullying colleagues.

It seems like nothing much had changed in the last 30 years or so, so I really commend you and your team in what you are attempting to do. I hope you succeed. By the way I am a rusted on Labor voter but I must give credit where it is due and the Labor Party has always been weak on reform of the Prison System.

Good luck in your endeavours!

Another email states —

Sir,

My name is ... I am a currently serving ...

I have been employed by the ... since ... and although I cannot say that I ‘love’ my job I am proud to call myself —

A staffer —

I am currently attached to —

This person states a particular prison —

... but see myself returning to the ‘prison floor’ in the next year or so.

I have strived to remain as motivated and enthusiastic as the day I first joined. I have seen many factions come and go and have always tried to remain my own man.

I have never taken the opportunity to contact ... however, I feel compelled to write and tell you how encouraging it is to see your recent unannounced visit ...

The email outlines a prison —

I hope you continue this practice.

In my 20+ years of service I have seen and heard of some questionable practices employed in the Department and I would like you to know that on the ground floor there are many ... like myself, that

are hoping you can successfully bring many positive changes to our system. I know the Department has some “rotten eggs” and unfortunately they are not all contained in the lower layers of our hierarchy.

Sir, with respect, I would urge you not to under estimate the lengths some, in this Department, will reach to undermine any sorely needed changes you endeavour to implement. I have seen some very capable leaders who have threatened to ‘bring a new broom and sweep —

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.