

CORRECTIVE SERVICES — YOUTH JUSTICE

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

I would like to welcome to the public gallery Ethan Molinar who is a political science student at Arizona State University. I welcome him and it is great to see him take an interest in Western Australian politics.

My question is to the Minister for Corrective Services. I refer to the media comment today by the Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia noting a cultural shift towards early intervention in the youth justice system. Can the minister update the house on the changes made in the youth justice area of corrective services?

**Mr J.M. FRANCIS replied:**

I thank the member for the question and his continued interest in this very, very important area when we are trying to reduce the number of juveniles in particular in detention in Western Australia—and very specially, the number of Aboriginal juveniles in detention in Western Australia. I also acknowledge the tabling of the report yesterday into Banksia Hill by Professor Neil Morgan, the Inspector of Custodial Services. He made a number of significant recommendations, but also findings, in that report. I encourage any member who is interested in this space to look at that report. He reflected on the significant improvements made by the Department of Corrective Services over the last couple of years, particularly the management of Banksia Hill Detention Centre.

I can inform the house that today the total number of juveniles in detention at Banksia Hill is 143, down from 206 just two years ago. That is a one-third reduction in the population of that facility. Not only that, the facility out at Banksia Hill has seen a significantly more settled approach, far stronger leadership and also a 25 per cent increase in the number of staff. Although we acknowledge that the report makes a number of recommendations, the government is making a lot of progress in some areas way ahead of time—such as the implementation of the Youth Justice Board and the separation of youth justice from adult justice within the Department of Corrective Services. The reality is—let us face it—that kids need a different type of treatment program and incarceration from adults. There is certainly also an improvement in the availability of bail accommodation, which has made a big difference to the population there as well. We are also undertaking a review of juvenile justice teams.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Willagee, I call you to order for the first time; I call the member for Warnbro for the first time. If you want to have private meetings or interesting conversations, go outside.

**Mr J.M. FRANCIS:** I have been driving fairly hard, as the Speaker would know, the commencement of the Telethon Kids Institute foetal alcohol spectrum disorder pilot program at Banksia Hill. On top of that, there is the youth justice innovation fund. Members would have also noticed that a couple of weeks ago we announced a \$520 000 program with the Aboriginal Legal Service of Western Australia over two years for mentoring and diversion of juveniles within the juvenile justice system. I note the comments this morning made by Craig Comrie from the Youth Affairs Council when he said he thought it was a demonstration of a cultural shift—namely, a desire by government and in the department to really, really deal with the issue. We are committed to trying to address the troubled lives of some very unique Western Australian juveniles who are in detention. We want to break the mould; we want to keep them out of the adult prison system so we do not see them waste their entire human capital. It is a shame that the Labor Party continues to misdiagnose the problem in corrections. For some reason, it keeps banging on about fine defaulters. We are getting on and dealing with the real issues in corrections and making a lot of progress. We are very proud of our achievements.