

PRISONS — OVERCROWDING

**212. Mr J.M. FRANCIS to the Minister for Corrective Services:**

I quickly and sincerely thank and acknowledge the Leader of the Opposition for my personal invitation to join Labor's shadow cabinet next week. But I do have a tip for him: if he wants to represent the people of WA, he should learn how to spell "Western Australians". That would be a good start.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Jandakot, I have given you the opportunity to ask a question in this place. I have spoken to you about this before. I formally call you to order for the first time today. I just want to hear a question from you, not statements, not preambles and not other issues.

**Mr J.M. FRANCIS:** My question is to the Minister for Corrective Services. While I make no apology for the government's tough stance on law and order, I am concerned about the potential for overcrowding in our state's prison system. Can the minister please inform the house of the steps being taken in this area?

**Mr D.T. REDMAN replied:**

I thank the member for Jandakot for the question.

**Mr P.B. Watson** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Albany, if you want to ask a question in this place, there are always opportunities. I formally call you to order for the first time.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** I thank the member for Jandakot for the question. He highlights a good point; that is, in November 2009 the Liberal–National government announced that an additional 640 beds would be constructed across Hakea Prison, Casuarina Prison and Albany Regional Prison. Yesterday afternoon I was at the opening of the Hakea facility. That unit has 256 beds. It is very pleasing that we have been able to respond to some pressure on accommodation within the prison system about 18 months or so ago. In the not-too-distant future we will also be looking at expansions within Casuarina and Albany—256 beds in Casuarina and 128 beds in Albany. This decision was on the back of \$64 million of savings that we were able to identify within the cost structure of expanding Acacia Prison, as well as \$7 million in savings to the planned Wheatbelt work camp. This has been done from savings.

I might add that Hakea Prison is the first point of contact for many people who go into our prison system. In essence, it is a clearing house. They are generally remand prisoners and also prisoners who are waiting for distribution to some of the other prisons within the state. It is for that reason that it is important that we have programs. It is important that we have a culture within Hakea to deal with its unique circumstances. We opened the new facilities yesterday. It was very pleasing to see the shadow Minister for Corrective Services there looking at the facility as well. He will agree that the nature of the facility is such that it meets the contemporary needs of prisons, prisoners and prison officers. It deals with the overcrowding issue, it deals with access to education and programs, and of course, it also deals with safer working conditions for staff. Some of the improvements include extensions to the perimeter wall to match the prison's existing perimeter. There are also purpose-built program rooms, prisoner recreation areas, prisoner common areas, prisoner food distribution areas and additional laundry facilities to deal with a contemporary prison design. In addition, it needs to be highlighted that a lot of the facilities within this particular prison unit were made by prison industries. I note that prisoners from Bunbury Regional Prison made the majority of the beds; prisoners from Hakea Prison made the ladders for the beds, the bed rails and shelving; prisoners from Wooroloo Prison Farm made the management benches, the pedestals and cabinets; and prisoners from Albany Regional Prison made the mattresses.

It is great to see the outcomes of the prison industries being able to cater and make a contribution to capital works. This is on top of a \$655 million capital works program that is happening within the Department of Corrective Services, which deals with a decade of underinvestment from the Labor Party. This government is committed to taking dangerous criminals off the streets, but we do not stop there; we are also prepared to invest in better prisons, with better rehabilitation programs to break the crime cycle.