

BANKSIA HILL DETENTION CENTRE

581. Mr P.T. Miles to the Minister for Corrective Services:

Can the minister update the house on how the Liberal–National government is continuing to improve the management and workplace conditions at the Banksia Hill Detention Centre?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS replied:

Mr Speaker —

Ms M.M. Quirk interjected.

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

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I will try again. I thank the member for Wanneroo for his question; it is a good question. We are trying to achieve an aim at Banksia Hill and that aim is to run a safe, efficient and effective juvenile detention centre for, obviously, very troubled juvenile detainees within the state of Western Australia. To do that we need enough staff to fill the lines in the roster; we need enough staff to ensure that that particular detention centre is run safely and effectively. Right now there is a shortage of youth custodial officers—we have made no secret about that. That has occurred for two reasons.

Ms M.M. Quirk interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Girrawheen!

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Firstly, over the previous few years the Department of Corrective Services has not attracted and trained enough youth custodial officers to make up for natural attrition. As in any workforce, people leave for various reasons. Secondly, when 26 per cent of youth custodial officers have active workers' compensation claims, it is very hard to run a facility, especially when many of them are unable to fill the lines in the roster. It creates an awful lot of vacancies and we need to address this issue. What are we doing about it? Firstly, we will ask youth custodial officers in head office or behind a desk somewhere to go back to doing their core job—to bring them back to Banksia Hill. Secondly, we are recruiting. We just started a class, a few weeks ago, training another 40 youth custodial officers at the Corrective Services training academy and we are recruiting right now for a second class to start in the new year. Nominations are open for another couple of weeks and if any members know anyone who wants to make a difference to the lives of very troubled kids and they are interested in a job as a youth custodial officer, I would encourage them to look at applying for one of those jobs. Thirdly, we are looking at where we can free up other youth custodial officers. Twenty-one YCOs currently work transporting juveniles around the state to detention centres and courts back and forth from Banksia Hill. In the adult correction system, the contractor, Serco, does about 33 000 prison movements every single year, excluding the temporary arrangements between Banksia Hill and Hakea Prison. There are roughly 2 000 juvenile movements a year and it makes perfect sense to extend that contract for a six-month period to free up those YCOs so they can fill the lines in the roster. It is interesting that we do not make these decisions unless we know that taxpayers will get value for money. Obviously, a public sector comparator was done and it turns out that a contractor doing this job will save taxpayers 10.9 per cent. It is almost 11 per cent cheaper to get a contractor to do the juvenile transfers and movements than it is to allow that to stay within the Department of Corrective Services. That is an interesting concept. The big question is whether opposition members will have the political courage and ticker to stand up to a union and do the right thing by the taxpayers of Western Australia or whether they will just fall over. I am betting that they will just roll over and do whatever the union says they should do. The reality is that we are keen to run a very effective and safe workplace for youth custodial officers. We are also very keen to get value for money for the taxpayers of Western Australia, and political ticker is needed to do that.