

POLICE — ABORIGINAL CUSTODY NOTIFICATION SERVICE

38. Mr P. ABETZ to the Minister for Police:

Can the minister please advise the house about the custody notification service that the Liberal-National government launched today to help provide safer custody environments for Aboriginal people?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY replied:

I thank the member for Southern River for the question and, indeed, his interest in a wide range of matters to do with Aboriginal people in Western Australia.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Members will recall that in June 2015 the Premier made a commitment to reduce the overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in our justice system and to reduce the number and occurrence of deaths in custody for Aboriginal people in our custody system. To that end as a government we have been focused on creating safer custody environments. We have been looking at opportunities and programs to help avoid incarceration for low-level offending. We have been supporting prevention activities and putting in place initiatives to divert people out of the criminal justice system. The Attorney General, the Minister for Corrective Services and I have been working together on a range of different initiatives. We are becoming quite excited about some of the initiatives that will be put forward in the near future. I am pleased to announce today an enhancement of the accessibility of the Aboriginal Visitors Scheme and the Aboriginal referral scheme. This enhancement comes into effect today. It has been put in place in the corrective services environment to reduce the incidence of self-harm and suicide in our corrective services system.

Ms M.M. Quirk interjected.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Member for Girrawheen, I thought you might be interested in this.

Ms M.M. Quirk: I am; I have been nagging the government for four years.

The SPEAKER: Order, member for Girrawheen! Minister, through the Chair.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: We are in action and we are doing something.

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, members! Member for Cannington, I call you to order for the first time. Member for Girrawheen, I do not want to hear from you.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Mr Speaker —

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Warnbro, I call you to order for the first time. We are starting to bog down.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: To be honest, I find it quite appalling that when we are talking about something as important —

The SPEAKER: Through the Chair.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY:— as Aboriginal deaths in custody that we are getting this kind of interjection from people who have no record to stand on.

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: We are expanding —

The SPEAKER: Sit down, minister.

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

The SPEAKER: I call you to order for the second time.

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

The SPEAKER: I call you to order for the third time.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: We have expanded our support services. There is a 24-hour a day, seven-day free-call 1 800 number that is run through the coordination centre at the Department of Corrective Services. The Aboriginal Visitors Scheme gives an opportunity for Aboriginal people in custody and their friends, family members and advocates to contact the Aboriginal Visitors Scheme via the free-call number. The scheme will provide advice and support to offenders in custody or their family, friends and advocates from either an Aboriginal person or another support person who has been trained in cultural awareness. We are expanding

access to this service across the length and breadth of the state, through regional Western Australia and the Northbridge lockup.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Warnbro, I call you to order for the second time and I call the member for Armadale for the first time. We are bogging down badly. Minister, quickly. Thank you.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Now all our regional lockups at WA police stations and the Northbridge lockup, the Perth watch house, will provide offenders or family, friends and advocates of Aboriginal people who come into the Northbridge watch house or any police lockups access to the Aboriginal Visitors Scheme. We think that this is a huge improvement. The way that it will work with WA Police —

Mr M.P. Murray interjected.

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Collie–Preston for the second time. The member for Armadale is on two calls. Minister, a quick answer through the Chair, please.

Mr W.J. Johnston: If somebody dies, it's your fault.

The SPEAKER: Member for Cannington, you were on three calls and you are now on three and a half calls.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: The way this will work in Western Australia Police lockups is either the Aboriginal person who has come into the custody of police or any of their friends and family, if there is an officer in charge or police auxiliary officer in charge who has any kind of concern about the health or wellbeing of any Aboriginal person in custody they will be able to access this scheme. They can speak to an Aboriginal person or to a person who has had cultural awareness training. We want to drive down the incidence of self-harm for Aboriginal people in custody and we want to drive down the incidence of suicide and ensure that we are looking after the mental health and wellbeing of offenders who find themselves in the custody of our corrective services or police. We remain committed to reduce the rates of harm for Aboriginal people in our custody environment. This is one of many initiatives that those opposite will hear the government roll out over time.