

CORRECTIVE SERVICES — RECIDIVISM RATE

165. Mr I.M. BRITZA to the Minister for Corrective Services:

Minister, the report on government services compares —

Mr D.J. Kelly interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Bassendean, I call you to order for the third time, I believe.

Mr I.M. BRITZA: The report on government services compares WA corrective services with the other Australian states and it reveals a decline in reoffending rates. Can the minister please outline to the house what this government is doing to achieve this downward trend?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS replied:

I thank the member for Morley for his question. It is an interesting question. I sincerely hope that a lot of members on both sides of the house take the opportunity to flick through the recent report on government services, which crosses a number of different portfolios. It has the odd flaw, but it is an interesting stocktake of how Western Australia is performing in a lot of different fields compared with other states. Having said that, it gives me some pleasure to be able to update the house on some of the figures that have come out of that report on government services as it applies to the Department of Corrective Services and, in particular, recidivism rates of prisoners in Western Australia. Ideally, I do not think that anyone here would not like to have a rate of zero; no-one likes to see any prisoners going back to jail after they have been released because it means that more can be done concerning their rehabilitation. However, I am also a realist and I understand that as much as we would like to see the rate at zero, we just cannot save everyone all the time.

The report is a snapshot. The 2014–15 rate of prisoners returning to prison within two years decreased in Western Australia by 7.2 per cent.

Mr P. Papalia: When?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: In 2014–15; open your ears!

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I am talking about the rate of prisoners who returned to prison, member for Warnbro—the recidivism rate after two years. Western Australia’s rate of prisoners who return to prison is now 36.2 per cent. It is now the lowest of all states and territories in the commonwealth.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Warnbro!

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: The rate of 36.2 per cent is the lowest of all the states and territories. Over the past five years, it has fallen in Western Australia from 44.2 per cent to 36.2 per cent of people returning to prison within two years.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

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

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Member for Warnbro, you make the dumbest interjections! Just listen, member for Warnbro. I am not talking about new prisoners going to jail; I am talking about those who are returning.

The SPEAKER: Speak through the Chair, please.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: The word is “recidivism”, mate; you should look it up in the dictionary sometime. Fair dinkum!

The SPEAKER: Through the Chair.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Over the past five years in Western Australia, the recidivism rate has gone from 44.2 per cent to 36.2 per cent. Meanwhile, the national recidivism rate has gone from 39.9 per cent and upwards to over 40 per cent. Most interestingly, we have made the greatest inroads in the juvenile estate where the average number of young people in prison aged between 10 and 17 has gone down by 12.8 per cent. We have had a significant reduction in the number of young people who are not just going to prison, but also the number of days that they are staying there is coming down by a similar rate. This reduction has happened for a number of different reasons, ranging from the \$5 million remote Aboriginal driver training program from royalties for regions funding; Fairbridge and the industries program that tries to get people jobs so they can be meaningfully employed and are less likely to reoffend when they get out, which is more of a longitudinal approach; through to the Wandoo Reintegration Facility, which has a return-to-prison rate of zero amongst Aboriginal prisoners when

they leave. It is still zero; not a single one has come back. The sad thing about all this is that if members opposite ever won government in this state —

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Warnbro, do you want to have a rest? Minister, you have one minute.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: The cost is so great, member for Warnbro, that I will tell the Prison Officers' Union that you want to cut their salaries —

The SPEAKER: Through the Chair, please!

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: That is fine by me, Mr Speaker.

I turn to the Youth Justice Board initiatives. The reform of the Department of Corrective Services is working and the only people in Western Australia who do not believe that is Labor Party members. Labor Party members are the only people who do not see the numbers as reported in the government services report. Of course, the great risk in all of this is that if the Labor Party ever won government in Western Australia, its slavish devotion to the union movement would mean that it would stifle innovation and shut down things like Wandoo; it would absolutely kill it because of its devotion to the union masters. The people who would lose the most are those prisoners who still have hope. The bottom line is that members opposite would deny prisoners hope simply —

Several members interjected.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: They would! Members opposite are happy to parade their moral vanity on issues like mandatory sentencing but at the same time the cost is denying prisoners hope.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for West Swan, you are now on three calls. If you shout out again, you are having a rest.