

## YOUTH-AT-RISK PROGRAMS

### *Motion*

**HON PHIL EDMAN (South Metropolitan)** [11.29 am] — without notice: I move —

That the Council calls on the state government to replicate successful youth-at-risk programs in known troubled areas across Western Australia.

I would like to talk about some youth-at-risk rehabilitation programs that are working quite well in the South Metropolitan Region. To start, I would like to highlight how they actually took place. In the Rockingham–Kwinana region we had a massive number of problems prior to 2008 with graffiti and day burglary involving quite a lot of violent offenders. We were finding that the graffiti was being done by gangs that would tag an area and the gang would then burgle a tagged house. The juvenile justice team, the local Magistrates Court and the Western Australian Police team in that district therefore came up with some fantastic rehabilitation programs for these youth-at-risk offenders and also for prolific and priority offenders. Two programs, one being Weld to Life, were established for offenders to learn some skills instead of putting them behind bars. In the Weld to Life program offenders learn how to weld. The program is aimed at youths between the ages of 12 and 17 years, and is conducted in conjunction with Challenger Institute of Technology as a participant in the program. These youths gain Certificate I in engineering and a certificate for wider opportunities for work. They also obtain a St John Ambulance first aid certificate. The program has been going now for about four years and has had about an 85 per cent success rate. Our government, the Barnett government, has put money into this program. The program was the overall winner of the Australian Crime and Violence Prevention Awards back in 2009, was one of the top eight finalists in the BHP Billiton world community service awards and won a Premier's Award as well. This program dealing with prolific offenders and youths at risk who have problems therefore has a very high success rate.

Some of the stories I have heard from some of these youths is that they have actually gone off and got apprenticeships with BHP. Most of them have got jobs. There are a couple of excellent examples of offenders who are no longer youths any more but are adults who have gone off and finished their apprenticeship and are now starting a family of their own. Thank God for this program, otherwise we would have probably seen them behind bars reoffending, probably in Casuarina Prison or who knows; or, God forbid, maybe even seen the likes of suicide. It is therefore a fantastic initiative and is working quite well. Even as I speak now, this program is working today with some 20 participants, half of whom were prolific offenders.

After the success of Weld to Life, which was targeted at violent offenders and the massive number of day burglaries in that region, we came up with another program similar to the concept designed by the juvenile justice team, the local Magistrates Court and the police; that is, the Right to Write program, which is a graffiti-reduction program. This program was also assisted through the Rockingham–Kwinana Development Office and was very much supported by our Minister for Culture and the Arts, Minister John Day. Fifteen of the worst offenders in that area had about 443 offences recorded against them. As a result of the pilot program in which they were taught a skill and how to do some decent art that could be sold, none of those offenders reoffended, and they probably had been the worst behaved of the youth in that area. That was a great result with a 100 per cent success rate. Minister John Day came down to Rockingham after the 15 youths had created the beautiful artwork, which was all sold and the proceeds went back into the Right to Write program. Our government has put some \$35 000 back into the program, and today, as I speak, it is running with another 15 youths involved, half of whom were prolific and priority offenders. If we combined both the Right to Write and the Weld to Life programs, the success rate for both programs would be about 85 per cent. Twenty per cent of the youths who are going through these programs are Indigenous. I would love to know the rate of rehabilitation of youths from the likes of Banksia Hill Detention Centre for juveniles or even of offenders in facilities such as Casuarina Prison, because these programs are working and the success rate is quite high. For the past four years, some 200 youth-at-risk and PPOs have gone through this program, which is quite a lot. They have been captured from not only Rockingham and Kwinana but as far down as Mandurah. I have heard also that the program has taken in some youths from the Pilbara region to give them a chance to see whether it worked, and they have not reoffended.

One of the highlights of these programs is the presence of a Western Australian police officer who participates and supervises them. It is important that that never changes. In the discussions I have with these youths—I have been down there a number of times—they tell me that in the first three weeks of the program, they cannot stand looking at a policeman or policewoman in uniform; they have real anger towards them. But because a uniformed police officer participates, by the time the offenders have completed the program, they have learnt respect for policemen or policewomen in uniform. I think that outcome is worth its weight in gold. If we took police officers out of the program, that would be the wrong thing to do.

**Extract from Hansard**

[COUNCIL — Thursday, 23 August 2012]

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I would like to read some of the media reports that show support for these programs and some views about putting these kids behind bars. *The West Australian* of 18 August 2009 contained an article called “Welding program cuts crime” that reads in part —

Commissioner Karl O’Callaghan described the result as sensational and said he would consider diverting another 20 officers into programs for high-risk youths. “If we can put money into these sorts of programs and expand them, we could make a big difference,” he said.

In the *Weekend Courier*, a local paper in Rockingham, an article dated 6 November 2009 reads in part —

Rockingham PCYC is the first Australian Police and Community Youth Centre to receive national recognition at the 2009 Australian Crime and Violence Prevention Awards presented in Canberra last week.

...

Commissioner of Police, Karl O’Callaghan, joined Senior Constable Tim Ellis, of Rockingham PCYC, in Canberra to receive the award, which was presented to Constable Ellis for his initiative of the Weld for Life Program.

...

Commissioner O’Callaghan said the results that have been achieved by the program had been remarkable with an 83 per cent reduction in offences committed by the participants.

That was relatively supportive. On 11 December 2009, there was, as I said, the roll-out with Minister John Day, who said that the Right to Write program was “a meaningful alternative to graffiti and at the same time teaches them new skills in the use of contemporary art mediums”. An article in *The West Australian* of 24 April 2012 headed “Jailing young criminals rejected by lobbyists” reads —

Police Commissioner Karl O’Callaghan’s push for repeat juvenile offenders to be sent behind bars sooner was rejected yesterday by lawyers and youth advocates.

They say detention is not stopping the cycle of crime and other earlier interventions are needed.

It continues —

But Criminal Lawyers Association of WA president Philip Urquhart said detention did not appear to be constructive and rates of reoffending remained far too high.

...

Youth Affairs Council executive officer Craig Comrie said evidence suggested detention led to entrenched criminal behaviour and should always be a last resort.

...

“We need to intervene early, even prior to young people becoming involved in criminal behaviour and that’s where we can make the most significant difference,” he said.

On 24 March an article in *The West Australian* referred to the rise in domestic violence in our community. I will not read that out because I am conscious of the time. I would just like to highlight a letter that was given to me by Superintendent Peter Halliday of the Peel district. There was some good news in the letter. He said that there has been a noticeable decline in the number of reported cases of graffiti. In February 2008 there were 52 reported matters. Over the same period this year we have had only 29 reports; it has gone down by nearly half. The bad news is in domestic assaults. In February 2008 we have had 44 reports. At the same time this year it was up to 111. There has been a big increase in domestic violence in the Peel district.

If a child is in a home with a good family and mum and dad are providing a good upbringing, the chances of the child becoming a prolific and priority offender or a youth at risk is minimised, but the majority of youths who are committing these offences come from families where there is domestic violence and drug and alcohol problems. If they keep breaking the law, of course something has to happen. The law stands; if people break the law, they do the time, but these programs provide them with a chance and they absolutely are working. They have an 85 per cent success rate, they are backed by our government and they are designed in such a way that they could be replicated in any trouble spot in Western Australia.

I know the police commissioner is very keen to roll out what will be called youth liaison officers. I am glad that my Premier in the other house has said that police officers will not be removed from PCYCs. That is great news to hear, but I think members will find that the police commissioner is saying they will be designated youth liaison officers. I know that in the Peel district in my electorate there will be only one of them to service an area

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from Mandurah to Serpentine–Jarrahdale and right up to Kwinana and Rockingham. That means there will not be a police presence in these programs. People will be lucky to see them for five minutes, and that means the programs will fall down. It is so important that a police officer in uniform is there to supervise and be involved in these programs.

Today—it must be a coincidence—Karl O’Callaghan is in the paper again. An article entitled “No easy fix for O’Callaghan” quotes the police commissioner —

“If you want to drive stats down, you target prolific priority offenders, you have this relentless pursuit of people who are on parole or juvenile offenders, but it doesn’t solve the genesis of the problem.”

I say that these programs will add value and benefit in helping out these PPOs and these youths at risk, rather than putting them behind bars.

There was also an article today in *The West Australian* entitled “Call to reduce rate of child detention”. In a speech given by the WA Commissioner for Children and Young People, Michelle Scott, she basically said that WA had the second-highest rate of detention of children in Australia. All these things are coming out of the woodwork. There is genuine concern and it is a big problem that needs to be dealt with.

To summarise, we have two programs that are working in this state. They are working in my electorate in Rockingham. There is strong evidence to suggest that these programs have a high success rate, which is important. What is even more important is giving children a life and a chance to get back into society, to have a job and a family, to no longer be a hindrance to society, and to stay out of our detention facilities.

**HON KEN BASTON (Mining and Pastoral)** [11.45 am]: I thank Hon Phil Edman for bringing this matter to the attention of the house. I have to say that until last week, I had only ever been to one police and community youth centre. As Hon Phil Edman has said, the Broome PCYC is held up as an example of a very successful PCYC. So I took the trouble of visiting the Broome PCYC last week, and I want to thank Senior Constable John Allanson, and the manager, Emma-Kate Gooch, for their time and for showing me around that facility.

The police and community youth centres provide a very important service. I am sure all members would have received a letter from the Youth Legal Service dated 29 May 2012. That letter refers to the 2008 Auditor General’s report on youth justice, and it says that for young people aged between 10 and 18 years, 96 out of 100 have had no contact with the police; three out of 100 have had one or two contacts with the police and then go on to be responsible citizens; and one out of 100 have had a significant number of contacts with the police, some in excess of 25 contacts. The letter goes on to say that the prominent group that has had in excess of 25 contacts with the police is mainly young Indigenous males from regional areas. We know that a number of young people are in that category, for a range of reasons. The main reasons are usually poor parenting, social setting, and educational disadvantage.

There are many programs available for youth. The youth services section in the Broome directory lists programs such as HYPE—Helping Young People Engage, Burdekin Youth in Action, Broome Youth Support Group, and the Broome PCYC. The Broome PCYC is probably the most predominant and well known of all those groups. PCYCs are located in my electorate in the major towns of Roebourne, Carnarvon, Exmouth and Kalgoorlie, and in 20 other regional and metropolitan centres.

It is interesting to look at the history of PCYCs. The first PCYC was formed in WA in 1941 as the Police Boys Club. The PCYCs celebrated their seventieth anniversary in 2011. This statement from when the Police Boys Club was formed is still relevant today —

The Police Boys Club was formed during the war years to provide guidance and structure to boys to reduce crime within the community, while their fathers were away fighting for their country ...

The key words for me are “to provide guidance and structure”. Of course that also applies today not just to boys but also to girls. At the Broome PCYC that I visited the other day, it is very evident what they are trying to achieve with the age group that they are working with. The key aims of the Broome PCYC are to promote and encourage youth development and create a safer and more harmonious environment for youth.

I have to say that the facilities at the Broome PCYC are fantastic. The police personnel at the Broome PCYC were in uniform. I have to say that, because of the weather in Broome, the uniform is a little more casual and is just shorts and T-shirts—which, as many people know, is regarded as quite formal wear in Broome. However, as the police officer at the Broome PCYC explained to me, the police officers always have the police badge on their T-shirt, so the police uniform is very much present.

The PCYC runs very successful recreation programs that include boxercise, circuit classes, boxing fitness, a creche, indoor cricket, junior boxing, a mums and bubs dance movement, taekwondo, an under-fives play gym,

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and weights. A council in the metropolitan area—I cannot remember exactly where it is—did not renew the lease for its local PCYC, and the PCYC's equipment was transferred to Broome, so there is a roomful of gym equipment that made me sweat just looking at it! It looked more like torture to me.

Earlier I mentioned the kids who get into trouble. One of the programs in the Broome learning centre is for children aged between 10 and 17 years. They are basically kids who have missed school regularly and who have had a brush with the law, sadly. The learning centre works in unison with the Department of Education and there are 12 young people in the program. The Department of Education would like the program to take more children, but it cannot handle any more at this stage. The program is all about teaching the basics of living a healthier lifestyle. The children get to choose the types of vegetables to their liking that they will grow and to plant gardens in tubs. Interestingly, the kids must have had a conviction to get into this particular program run by the learning centre. If they do not have a conviction, the centre does not receive any federal funding. It is one of those crazy things that only people with a conviction fit into this program. Even so, it is fantastic that they are being catered for. The aim of the program is to engage with and guide young people into programs that have the aim of promoting healthier lifestyles, choices and positive attitudes, and to give these young people a second chance in life and possible opportunities to career pathways. The learning centre employs a full-time teacher and a youth worker and is very much overseen by the police. It is run in partnership with Broome Senior High School, Western Australia Police and the West Kimberley Youth Justice Services. That is where the federal funding comes into it. It receives funding from not only the federal government, but also the state Department of Education and Woodside. Woodside provided the classroom and the lean-to with a barbecue. The Australian government's Attorney-General's office is also funding it. I have heard that it costs \$100 000-plus to lock up someone who goes off the rails; therefore, the money spent on this program is money well spent. I believe that the Men's Sheds group is looking at running this type of program in Fitzroy Crossing. There are no PCYCs up there, but I think that a PCYC will be needed there in the future.

I was very impressed with the new boxing ring in Broome. On 23 August, the latest *Broome Advertiser* had a headline "Boxers ready to rumble". For the first time in three years, a boxing tournament will be held for the public in Broome. The Broome PCYC boxing club exhibition fight-night will be held on 25 August and I urge anyone who is in Broome to attend. There will be 10 fights starting at 6.30 pm. That is another thing the PCYC has been involved with. It is most important to have police involvement with the PCYCs. As Hon Phil Edman said, when the kids first go there, they cannot stand the police. They hate police. This is about getting those in that group involved, getting them on side, getting them to have respect for society and giving them a chance in life to go further than that. I commend the member's motion; I think it is excellent.

**HON SALLY TALBOT (South West) [11.54 am]:** The opposition is pleased to find Hon Phil Edman once again on the same page as the opposition. I congratulate the honourable member for moving this motion. He seems to be taking the lead in quite a few issues on which he finds himself with a contrary point of view to some of his colleagues on the government benches. Most notable, apart from this motion at the moment, is in his advocacy for government support for sequential land use, about which I have had several interesting conversations with the honourable member.

The opposition will support this motion wholeheartedly. However, I want to start by saying that I think it is a bit sad that the motion is phrased in these terms. I can see what the honourable member is trying to do—he is doing it with a certain amount of diplomacy—but I would have liked to see a motion that said that the Council congratulates the state government on replicating successful youth-at-risk programs in known troubled areas across Western Australia, because, of course, what we find between the lines of Hon Phil Edman's motion is the simple fact that the government is not putting the resources into replicating these successful programs, and that is a crying shame.

I went to a function last week that I want to refer to in the context of adding some substance to the motion being debated, and that was a breakfast last Thursday, a week ago, put on by the Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia—YACWA—at Fraser's in Kings Park. The Minister for Youth, Hon Robyn McSweeney, was due to represent the Premier at that function to talk about the government's youth policy. Unfortunately, the Premier was not able to attend. In the end, the minister also was not able to attend; she was called to urgent business elsewhere in the state. So her place was taken, and I must say taken very ably, by the member for Ocean Reef, who I think is the minister's parliamentary secretary. The member for Ocean Reef spoke very eloquently, and I have no criticism of him in that regard. Unfortunately, the speech really missed the mark quite seriously, and I want to make this point because it might be slightly different from the feedback that the minister has received up to this point. The parliamentary secretary's speech was focused around the policy document "Our Youth—Our Future: Western Australia's Youth Strategic Framework", and I am sure that I will not be the only member of this place who has looked at this document with some interest. It is a good document as far as it goes, but it

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misses a fundamental point, and I want to share with honourable members the way in which this became evident during the presentation at the breakfast last week.

As I said, the member for Ocean Reef spoke quite eloquently, and I congratulated both him and the departmental officers who were there on the quality of the speech. I pointed out that it was quite substantially better than anything I, as a parliamentary secretary, had been given by the Department of Environment and Conservation. However, when we got to question time, there was a very, very interesting turn of events. The member for Ocean Reef had been quite upbeat about the things that the government was doing. We all know that in this youth portfolio, which I know Hon Donna Faragher held for a couple of years at the beginning of this term of government, some terrific programs are supported by the Youth office. It is not a spending portfolio; it is really a grants-allocating portfolio, and that grant money is spent very well on things like cadets, and that is very commendable. As I say, the speech prepared by the department was quite upbeat. Question time went like this: the first question was about the lack of mental health intervention support for children who were incarcerated. That cut right across the pitch that the government had been very keen to make that morning. I emphasise that I am not being critical of the programs that are funded out of the Youth office; all the programs, such as the cadets, are very, very worthwhile and I think they have bipartisan support in this house. But that first question was about young people who find themselves incarcerated. They have obviously committed very serious offences, but the majority of them have been brought to that place by some sad—to put it mildly—and, in most cases, tragic circumstances in their lives, yet service providers report that there is very little, if any, government intervention to help provide mental health services for those children.

The second question was specifically about the failure of the minister's department, the Department for Child Protection, and the police to help children in the southern corridor of the metropolitan area who were trying to escape from various kinds of abuse, including drug houses, neglect, domestic violence and physical abuse. The questioner was quite emotional. She was an academic and service provider who was coordinating quite a large team working in the southern corridor and she reported the absolute frustration of trying to provide concrete practical help for children to escape those dreadful circumstances and to start building better lives for themselves. She specifically named the Department for Child Protection and the police, who she said do their best. All these people who reported problems paid quite glowing tribute to the agencies that are trying to work with very few resources, so it is not a question of defending what child protection officers and police are doing on the ground. What all these questioners pointed out was that the government is simply abandoning the service providers, which are being pushed to the brink of desperation because of the lack of resources.

The third question was probably the most poignant. I must inform honourable members that the third questioner got a round of applause from the audience, which consisted of about 100 extremely well-informed and savvy service providers in this area. The third question was about the lack of suicide prevention programs in the inner metropolitan area. The point made by the questioner was that only one service is provided with any kind of quantifiable funding. He said that it was a regular occurrence for children as young as nine to kill themselves. When the service provider does the research, it finds that all these children had minimal contact with any support service whatsoever.

Those were the first three questions, and members can tell from the picture I am painting that the atmosphere in the room changed quite dramatically when those questions were asked. Other questions were about the irrelevance of the information produced by government agencies for young people about sexual health, and the absence of programs to help Aboriginal kids integrate into the mainstream economy. The government is not short of information about how to do this. I know the government is not short of information or advice about the sorts of steps it should be taking, but it is just not taking them; it is just not putting the resources into these programs. The final question was asked by Craig Comrie himself, the executive director of the Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia. I noticed Hon Phil Edman also referred to Craig Comrie. I think that this state is indebted to Craig and the people he puts around him for the superb work they do in trying to assist young people and in trying to change the political agenda as it relates to young people. Craig made the point that the government needs to do more to address the public's image of young people. Craig also made the very interesting point, similar to the one made by Hon Ken Baston, that 96 per cent of young people lead perfectly law-abiding lives and make productive contributions to society. My quarrel is that the government focuses its programs on dealing with the four per cent without realising that a large proportion of that 96 per cent are also at risk and in danger. I just wish that the government would listen to the points being made in this motion.

**HON NIGEL HALLETT (South West)** [12.05 pm]: I thank Hon Phil Edman for bringing this motion to the house. It is something that he has been very passionate about for a long time. Certainly, he has not been afraid to put the issue on the agenda and bring to the house's attention the work and success that the police have achieved with the PCYCs over many years. The programs that the PCYCs offer are certainly proven programs. As Hon Ken Baston said, the boxing program in places such as Broome has been very successful. Albany and Bunbury

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are two of the towns in my electorate with PCYCs that have weights and climbing facilities. The gym in Bunbury has been an extremely successful program. The Blue Light discos have gone on for many years.

I will touch on the two centres of Albany and Bunbury and, in particular, a police officer who has been heavily involved in Albany since I knew him as a 17-year-old. He has been a fantastic community person, from football umpiring to his police ability and his work with the youth through many parts of the state.

In Albany, somewhere between 1 000 and 1 500 young people use the centre each week. One of the most successful programs is the Strike II program, which targets youth aged between 12 and 17 years. Younger ones are accepted, but the PCYC tries to stick within that age group. Sixty per cent of those who attend the Strike II program are Indigenous, which is an extremely high figure. One of the major funders of this program in Albany is Healthway. The community has certainly seen a big benefit from these people who volunteer their time and also from the direction of the police. If there is one thing that life has taught us, it is respect for and discipline of the police force. I have seen a few people who have gone off the rails over time and learned to come back and respect the man in blue, which has not only turned their lives around, but also helped them become great contributors to society down the track. As Hon Ken Baston mentioned, the cheapest way to control behaviour is to keep these youngsters on track in the formative years. It is not about popping them in jail, with the costs that incurs, and then rehabilitating them later.

The Bunbury Police and Community Youth Centre facility is used by 1 200 people a month and an average of 70 new members join each month. One of the most used programs in Bunbury is the gymnastics program. Just under 200 people are on the waiting list for the gymnastics program because the gymnastics centre is so well developed and one of the few in the region. Once again, the PCYC has provided a facility that is not available in many other towns. The police have certainly managed this centre very well. I know that others want to speak on this motion. I thank Hon Phil Edman for moving this motion; he has done an extremely good job of bringing the matter to the house's attention.

**HON ALYSSA HAYDEN (East Metropolitan)** [12.09 pm]: I stand today to support Hon Phil Edman's motion. There is no doubt among anyone in this room that our youth need the ongoing support and direction of leaders in our community. I note that today there seems to be a competition between members about who has the best PCYC in their electorate. I am proud to say that I have the best PCYC out in Midland. If anything, this motion has made all members well aware of the PCYCs and the work they do in their regions, and I can tell Hon Phil Edman that I am lucky to have in Midland one of the nine PCYCs in the metropolitan region. Over many years the respect and the rapport between our youth and authority figures have decreased. I know when I am out and about at business events, or even at social events standing around the barbecue, the issue of antisocial behaviour often comes to the fore and is discussed at length. I am sure most members would agree that the most common response is that our police need to be tougher and not to take any rubbish or disrespect. I am sure, like many members in this chamber, I cannot count the number of times I have heard the comment, "In my day, if you gave the copper lip, he would give you a clip behind the ear and send you home; and when you got home and told your parents, they would give you a clip behind the ear because you most probably deserved it." I keep reminding the people who make these comments that fortunately society has come a long way since then and that clipping someone behind the ear is no longer the way we handle these situations because it has been proven that it is not the way to achieve success in these situations.

Our population has grown immensely, and our multicultural population has increased and continues to grow; and not all communities raise their children in the same manner and structure as I had the privilege of being raised in. There are different priorities and levels of respect taught at home, and they are not the same as those taught in many homes maybe in the 1950s and 1960s. Because of this, our police officers are now faced with a new role in our society—that is, to educate the new generation about respect, responsibility and behaviour and how to conduct themselves in and be part of society. Police officers now have a new role, which the generations before them did not have; they are taking on a parenting role with the youth of today and showing them some structure and discipline. That is why it is very important that our troubled youth are given the opportunity to work alongside uniformed police officers as this will start to build rapport and gain a little respect. We all know that respect is not something that is given, and that people have to work for and earn respect. However, I believe that having officers in uniform around our youth at risk allows that respect to be built and for youth to understand the way they should behave in the community, the way they should be treated and how they can be responsible and play a major role in society.

As I said, I am very proud that Midland has an excellent PCYC. Just recently, it was featured in a front-page article in our local paper, the *Midland Reporter*, when it was awarded the WA PCYCs' JP Stratton youth services award. The Midland PCYC outperformed all 22 PCYCs around the state, which is why I stand confidently saying that the Midland PCYC is the best PCYC in WA. The program that won it this award is the Northbridge diversion program. I have worked in Midland for most of my working life, and we all know that

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Midland has a high number of youth at risk and that a lot of them hop on the train at the Midland train station and go into Northbridge on a Friday or Saturday night. This is where a lot of our trouble is happening: youth with nothing to do in the outer suburbs who are hopping on the train and going into the city. The Northbridge diversion program is a fantastic initiative by the manager of the Midland PCYC, Michelle Wallbank. The whole idea is to stop the kids hopping on a train and get them to head over to the police and community youth centre. The centre opens at six o'clock in the evening and closes at 10 o'clock. The staff and volunteers who work there make sure that these children and young adults are escorted home safely and without any fuss. I believe the queue starts building from 3.00 pm, although the doors do not open until six o'clock, and up to 120 people attend this event. I think that, if anything, the City of Perth should contribute some money to this program, because its streets are now a little easier to work with on Friday nights. As part of the program, it conducts health and sex education talks. A lot of these children are aged between 10 and 18 years, yet their parents do not know that they are out at six o'clock on a Friday night. They obviously lead a different life from the life I was privileged to lead as a young child. The PCYC not only gives them somewhere safe and dry to go at night, but also provides them with education. As I have said, there are health and sex education talks, different sports activities, arts and crafts activities and even movies. The money that has enabled the PCYC to conduct this program has come from the Department of Sport and Recreation and the proceeds of crime funding. A couple of local businesses have also contributed to make sure that this program continues. As I have said, under this program by the Midland PCYC, 120 kids are taken off the street on Friday nights.

The PCYC also conducts a lot of other programs during the week, one of which is quite vital, as we are talking about children from the age of 10 upwards. Every Monday morning the centre provides food packages to young people and women. It also conducts judo, boxing and gymnastics classes. It has bounce discos every three weeks to give kids somewhere to go for a bit of a party and a dance. It has training rooms and out-of-school care for those kids who have no home to go to or who do not have a safe environment at home. Of course, the leadership group offers mentoring by people of the same age. This program allows youth at risk the opportunity to know that there is something out there and that someone is listening to them and helping.

The reason I raise the issues behind the Midland PCYC is to support the motion that Hon Phil Edman has moved. These programs need to be shared amongst the PCYCs in the rest of the state. It is heartening to hear the many good stories from the PCYCs. Obviously, they talk to each other and share programs. We just need to make sure that these programs and the good work of the PCYCs continue.

I would like to finish by saying that our youth at risk will learn only by example. The leaders in our community need to lead by example. That is why it is important for our police officers to show the way, so that they are not stigmatised as the necessary evil to pull these kids into line, as some kids have in the back of their minds, but that they are on their side to provide a safe community and to mentor and help them. I am pleased that our uniformed officers will remain in the PCYCs. I, along with Hon Phil Edman and a lot of colleagues on this side of the chamber, will always advocate for that to happen. I acknowledge the great work of Michelle and all the staff, police officers and volunteers at Midland PCYC who do this work. It is hard work, but I know it is very rewarding. They play a major role in society to keep our community safe.

**HON DONNA FARAGHER (East Metropolitan — Parliamentary Secretary)** [12.19 pm]: I will not make a long contribution because I know a couple of other members would like to make a contribution before this debate ends. I agree with all the comments that have been made by my colleagues on this side of the house, particularly with respect to the role of police and community youth centres and the role of police in supporting youth programs that assist young people at risk. I strongly support the continuing role of police officers involved with police and community youth centres, but I also recognise the role they play outside those centres and strongly support that. One of the examples I can point to within the electorate of East Metropolitan Region is the partnership that has been formed between the PCYC and Native Animal Rescue. That is a partnership to deliver the River Connections program, which sees young people at risk, some of whom have been in detention, focusing on mentoring and positive activities, learning about caring for the environment and learning about caring for animals. This is a very good way of encouraging positive behaviour in these young people and enabling them to gain important mentoring and other things that perhaps they might not otherwise have been able to gain.

I found it somewhat curious—it is perhaps what prompted me to rise—that the opposition spokesperson for youth mentioned that there is bipartisan support for a number of youth programs. I have no problem with that; in fact, I am very pleased that has been said in the house. I remind the house, in case there is any misunderstanding, that under the previous Labor government the youth portfolio was left, one might say, in a parlous state, and I can give one example of that; there are many more. The member mentioned the Cadets WA program, which is a program very dear to my heart and to a number of other members. I remind the house that the program commenced during the term of the Court Liberal government, under Hon Mike Board, who was Minister for

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Youth at the time. It has been operating very successfully now for a number of years. I understand that around 7 000 young people are participating in almost 200 cadet units. I am not sure whether we are at the 200 mark yet, but I certainly know that it is a goal that Cadets WA wants to achieve. When I came in as Minister for Youth, I was quite surprised, shocked and disappointed to find that in the eight years of Labor government —

**Hon Simon O'Brien:** Seven and a half.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** It was seven and a half; we will not give them another six months. In the seven and a half years of Labor government, there was not one single increase in funding to the Cadets WA program. It was not until the Liberal–National government came into power that for the first time in 14 years there was a funding increase to Cadets WA. The simple fact is that cadet units were struggling, and struggling very hard. In terms of replication, we not only increased the funding, but also have expanded it. I set up a trial with respect to the River Rangers cadet program because I thought it was important for young people who are still in their primary school years to have the opportunity to participate in Cadets WA; it is currently linked only to secondary schools. I was absolutely thrilled when Minister McSweeney announced this year that that program would become a permanent cadet type with, I think, a further \$1.8 million going towards it. I want to put on record that it is the Liberal–National government, not the Labor Party, that actually supports young people in these very important initiatives, and that it was this government that was the first government in 14 years to increase cadet funding.

**HON COL HOLT (South West)** [12.23 pm]: I apologise, Minister for Youth! I will be very brief because I know the minister would like to say a few words. I obviously back the motion and I will just add my thoughts on it. I agree that a lot of isolated success stories out there have obviously delivered results, but I think we actually need to have a real rethink about how we roll out those successes to other regions and other areas. I think there has been a bit of a failure in a coordinated approach. I can name a lot of success stories, as can every member in this place in their isolated regions. While the PCYC programs are a bit broader, other things are also happening. For example, in Albany Mr Eugene Eades works with at-risk youth by taking them out to the bush for Nyoongah language and culture work. I would like a much more coordinated approach taken to identifying these success stories and spreading them throughout the whole of regional Western Australia. We need to rethink how we spread those stories. I will leave my contribution there to allow the minister some time to speak.

**HON ROBYN McSWEENEY (South West — Minister for Youth)** [12.24 pm]: I would like to thank Hon Donna Faragher, the former youth minister, for what she did when she was Minister for Youth. She was a fantastic youth minister. I would also like to thank Hon Phil Edman, who has put his heart and soul into youth issues in his area of Rockingham. He has taken me to Rockingham and shown me exactly what he does, and I am very, very impressed. Our diversionary programs throughout the state, of which we have many—other members have talked about the PCYCs so I will leave them alone—include one at the Edmund Rice Centre in Nollamara. Many people might be quite surprised to know that children from approximately 69 cultures attend Balga Senior High School. The Edmund Rice Centre has a lot of children from different backgrounds going to it and they do sport with the children. It teaches the parents and children to get along with each other. It is a fantastic program that brings together all community members. I was out there not so long ago presenting a cheque for over half a million dollars for that. Another great diversionary program is Midnight Basketball in Armadale, which is in Hon Alyssa Hayden's area. I neglected to thank the other members who have contributed to this debate. Hon Donna Faragher mentioned our cadets. We also have the Leeuwin Ocean Adventure Foundation program, the Girl Guides and the Scout Association of Australia. We have many volunteers in Western Australia who are helping our young people by mentoring them and helping them along.

I want to say thank you to Hon Phil Edman for bringing this motion to the house. We have certainly enjoyed listening to the debate. I want to assure the public of Western Australia that we do put money into diversionary programs and that we do look after our youth. Hon Sally Talbot fired a bit of a shot when she first started speaking. I have not seen the shadow Minister for Youth at many of the functions that I have been to over the last few years, and I am looking forward to her attending some functions with me.

**HON PHIL EDMAN (South Metropolitan)** [12.27 pm] — in reply: I thank all members who have contributed to this debate. Hon Sally Talbot fluffed a little bit around the question. Our state government has been 100 per cent, fully supportive of these programs. I have to say, and it is very important that everyone understands, that our government cannot direct the police commissioner on what to do with his police staff. If the police commissioner does not support the replication of these programs that are working quite well, it is not going to happen. A police officer has to be based in the PCYCs, whether they are in the Pilbara or other troubled areas. Unless Karl O'Callaghan gets behind this program and provides youth liaison officers or police officers, it just will not happen. People cannot point the finger at the Barnett government. I would also like to mention that the Chief Justice of Western Australia, Wayne Martin, QC, actually did the program with the kids back in June. He got in his overalls and hat and spent the day welding with these offenders, along with Judge Denis Reynolds



**Extract from *Hansard***

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from the Children's Court. Both were very, very impressed. So impressed was Chief Justice Martin that he now sits on the PCYC board, along with other new members such as Nigel Satterley. The program is definitely supported by the Chief Justice. If we are to send a message about replication, it has to be supported by our police commissioner. These programs are being supported by the Barnett government. I commend this recommendation to the house. I thank everybody for their contributions. Let us not only make Western Australia a better place in which to live, but also give the children of this state the life that they deserve.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.