

YOUTH JUSTICE INNOVATION FUND — WIRRPANDA FOUNDATION GRANT

204. Mr P. ABETZ to the Minister for Corrective Services:

Can the minister please update the house on the Wirrpanda Foundation pilot program, which he announced in Parliament on 17 March 2015?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS replied:

I thank the member for Southern River for his question. Today is the anniversary of the implementation, with the Wirrpanda Foundation, of that program for longitudinal mentoring, the Moorditj Ngoorndiak Mentoring Program. My pronunciation is probably not the best! It has been running now for 12 months, it has had a number of successes and I think it is worth noting what they are and how they have been going because, at the end of the day, this is taxpayers' money that we are investing into this program to try to stop the reoffending of young Aboriginal boys.

The program started at Banksia Hill Detention Centre a year ago and today is the one-year anniversary. Since then, it has done complete longitudinal mentoring for 10 at-risk young men, who have since been released from Banksia Hill, either under conditions or to freedom as their terms expired. So far the success rate of keeping them out of prison has been 60 per cent. Four of them have, unfortunately, returned to the justice system and Banksia Hill, but when we look at the cost of the contract compared with the cost of keeping a young person in juvenile detention in Western Australia, it has obviously been money well spent. For the record, the cost of keeping a juvenile in detention is obviously far more than that of keeping an adult in detention, for a number of different reasons, predominantly education and duty of care. It costs the state \$316 000 per year, per young person at Banksia Hill. If we can for a small investment stop some of them returning, we are getting pretty good value for money for the taxpayer, not to mention the fact that we are helping someone get on with their life, to get a job and to contribute to society and all the positive things that come with getting them out of the cycle of reoffending.

I am pleased to also announce the extension of funding for this program for a further two years at a cost of \$557 000. That is \$557 000 to the Wirrpanda Foundation for another two years, after the first 12-month trial seems to have been getting some pretty good successes. As I said, it is only 10 of them, but a 60 per cent success rate, keeping six out of 10 of them from returning to the justice system, is a pretty good result considering that without longitudinal mentoring and the support they get post-release from the Wirrpanda Foundation, their reoffending rate and return-to-jail rate would have been much higher. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Wirrpanda Foundation for the great work it has been doing.