

PRISONERS — COMMUNITY WORK

37. Mr D.C. NALDER to the Minister for Corrective Services:

Minister, I know that the government has a keen interest in ensuring there is a wider practice of getting prisoners to undertake community work outside of correctional facilities. With this in mind, can the minister inform the house on some of the projects that prisoners have undertaken while serving out their custodial services?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS replied:

Thank you for that question, member for Alfred Cove. Can I also congratulate the member on his election as the member for Alfred Cove. I suspect there are a lot of members on both sides of this house who are very happy to see him now as the member for Alfred Cove.

I listened intently last night to the member's inaugural speech in this house in which he raised some very important issues. One of those issues made me reflect on my inaugural speech in which I spoke about the greatest thing that we can do to help the impoverished people of Western Australia, which is to give them a sense of purpose. That was highlighted to me last Friday when I visited Karnet Prison Farm, which is in the Minister for Local Government's electorate—it was great to see the minister there—and also in the electorate of the federal member for Canning, Don Randall; it was great to see him there. It was Karnet Prison Farm's fiftieth anniversary. It was disappointing that the shadow minister could not make it; he was invited. Had he made it, he may have learnt something.

Mr P. Papalia: I have been there a few times, mate!

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I am sure the member has!

The great thing that is happening in that area, particularly in that prison, is that people who are serving their time are being given that sense of purpose. They are working on community-based orders to do very worthwhile projects all across Western Australia. Not only does that facility have a brilliant record in providing fresh food and produce to the entire prison system in Western Australia through its agriculture and meat processing products, but it also does a lot of work across the community.

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: The member for Armadale would be fascinated with this, because they do this in other areas. They go out during the day and repair and repaint important things in society like fire hydrants. They replace signs. They do a lot of the repair and clean-up work after bushfires and floods. In fact, they did a lot of work in Carnarvon following the 2010 floods in the member for North West Central's electorate. It is great to see prisoners get out and make a meaningful contribution to society and, as I said, achieve some sense of purpose that will help them get on the straight and narrow road when they get out. In particular, I want to quickly touch on one of the areas that I was most impressed to see them work on; that is, the restoration and maintenance of war memorials in conjunction with the RSL, in various locations across Western Australia. The member for Albany will know that they have done some work in Albany, but they do work all across the state helping to repaint and tidy up RSL war memorials in various locations. I think that is one of the greatest things that prisoners can do, especially at this time of the year in the lead-up to Anzac Day next Thursday.

I thank the member for the question. It is brilliant to see prisoners get that little sense of purpose. I encourage the department to continue to identify prisoners who can be given those community-based orders so they can get out of prison and return to society.