

CORRECTIVE SERVICES — BALGO COMMUNITY FEUDING

3169. Ms J. Farrer to the Minister for Corrective Services:

- (1) What is the Minister doing to intervene and resolve the ongoing feuding in Balgo Community?
- (2) What is the Ministers approach to Juvenile Justice prevention and diversion in Balgo Community?

**Mr J.M. Francis replied:**

- (1) The Department of Corrective Services (the Department) does not have Youth Justice staff permanently based in Balgo. Ground travel takes upwards of four hours one way from Halls Creek, the closest town. As at 29 October 2014 there are three staff in Balgo working with Police until 31 October 2014 clearing up Juvenile Justice Team referrals from the region.

The Department has taken guidance from the Western Australia Police (WAPol) who are the legal authority to intervene, provide safety, detain and control when these situations arise in the Balgo Community. Department staff gather information, conduct on ground intelligence and act upon instruction from the WAPol. The most common course of action is to stay away from the area to ensure Department staff were not placed in a dangerous situation and to maintain safety until police restore lawful order to the Community.

- (2) The Department's Youth Justice staff manage young people who are on court orders and undertake prevention work with families and young people referred into our services to prevent criminal behaviours from escalating. As a preventative measure, staff work with families agreeable to working with the Department on intervention strategies. To date the Department have had just a few referrals related to the feuding in Balgo; attempts are made to visit the Balgo Community every fortnight.

Interagency initiatives allow the Department to address issues particular to and prevalent in each community. The Department works closely with the Departments for Education and Child Protection and Family Services, WAPol, TAFE, local community members and the local youth workers who assist us in engaging young people on the Department's behalf in between visits. WAPol are conducting mediation work with the main protagonists in an attempt to resolve the ongoing issues that have led to the family disharmony in Balgo.

The Youth Justice Services Division is in constant high level discussion with multiple agencies regarding Balgo and the many communities in the East Kimberley, including exhibiting a willingness to collaborate and assist in any practicable capacity.