

**YOUTH JUSTICE INNOVATION FUND — WIRRPANDA FOUNDATION GRANT**

*Statement by Minister for Corrective Services*

**MR J.M. FRANCIS (Jandakot — Minister for Corrective Services)** [2.07 pm]: In August 2014, I announced in Parliament the establishment of a Youth Justice Innovation Fund. The Youth Justice Board has an initial \$2 million to fund innovative, community-based programs that will address the multiple and complex factors associated with high youth reoffending rates. I inform the house that the Youth Justice Board has awarded the first grant under the Youth Innovation Fund with a sum of \$320 000 given to the Wirrpanda Foundation. The foundation will use the money to pilot a longitudinal mentoring program for boys between the ages of 12 and 18 years in detention at Banksia Hill Detention Centre. The focus of the program will be to reduce reoffending rates amongst young Aboriginal men. The program, called Moorditj Ngoorndiak, will provide culturally appropriate mentoring and support services for up to 10 young offenders. Aboriginal mentors will work with the young person and his family in preparation for the young person's release from detention. This support will continue when the young person is released, with mentoring continuing in the community. It will link the young person to education and employment opportunities. The program has a strong emphasis on giving to the young person, or increasing the young person's, self-worth and pride in his Aboriginal identity. The program will engage, train and support young men to improve their life choices through engagement with a positive role model and improved links to existing services and the community.

Extensive evidence that has been generated in the United Kingdom and North America indicates that these types of intensive, skills-based, family-focused mentoring programs can have a dramatic impact on reoffending rates. Mentoring programs have been proven to reduce the likelihood of reoffending by as much as 21 per cent. The Youth Justice Board will be working with the Telethon Kids Institute to evaluate the program. The Wirrpanda Foundation will receive a performance-based incentive for every young person who does not reoffend for up to six months post-release. The program is an example of the Aboriginal community coming to the department with its ideas about what we can do together to improve outcomes for young men in detention. This is just one of many innovative programs currently being evaluated by the Youth Justice Board. I look forward to announcing further grants in the coming months to ensure that young offenders are given a greater chance to become contributing members of their community. In closing, I thank members of the Youth Justice Board and staff from the Department of Corrective Services, some of whom are in the public gallery today.