

ACACIA PRISON — SERCO CONTRACT — MOBILE PHONES

**739. Mr P. PAPALIA to the Minister for Corrective Services:**

I refer to the story on the front page of today's *The West Australian* that reveals that a prisoner in the privately operated —

**Mr T.R. Buswell** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Treasurer, I call you to order for the first time.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I refer to the story on the front page of today's *The West Australian* that reveals that a prisoner in the privately operated Acacia Prison is being investigated after his Facebook page was used to threaten people and communicate with others outside the prison.

- (1) How many mobile phones have been found inside Acacia Prison in the last 12 months?
- (2) Is it not true that the private prison operator, Serco, should be penalised under the conditions of the contract whenever an illicit mobile phone is found inside the prison?
- (3) On how many occasions has Serco been penalised in the last 12 months due to breaches of the Acacia contract in relation to mobile phones?

**Mr J.M. FRANCIS replied:**

- (1)–(3) I think everyone in this house will understand when I say to the member for Warnbro right now that I cannot answer that question—a little bit of notice might have been helpful. But I will make some general observations on the discovery of mobile phones within prisons.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Willagee, I call you to order for the first time. Member for Girrawheen, I will pretend I never heard you.

**Mr J.M. FRANCIS:** I try to do that all the time as well!

Over recent years, about 20 mobile phones have been found within the prison system each financial year. That is across all 14 estates. Technology has evolved over the last financial year and there are now mobile phone detectors. A specific dog in the detection unit can smell lithium and detect the lithium polymer and lithium ion batteries within a mobile phone. The department has also rolled out what are called BOSS chairs, which are body orifice security scanner seats.

Several members interjected.

**Mr J.M. FRANCIS:** This is a very serious issue. When people go into prison and they are in a certain classification, they are required to sit in the seat, and it can detect whether an object is hidden somewhere within the human body.

Last financial year, 30 mobile phones were discovered. Just to keep this in context, do not forget that mobile phone technology is evolving, like everything else, and phones are getting smaller and becoming a little bit easier to conceal—obviously a little bit easier than the old Motorola bricks that we would have seen 15 years ago!

Several members interjected.

**Mr J.M. FRANCIS:** This is a serious issue.

In the five months of this financial year, due to a crackdown on people smuggling contraband into prisons, about 30 mobile phones have been found in prisons in Western Australia. It is unacceptable to have drugs and mobile phones within the prison system in Western Australia and the government is doing everything it humanly can —

**Mr D.J. Kelly:** How many times has Serco been penalised?

**Mr J.M. FRANCIS:** Member for Bassendean, it is not just Serco; phones are also found in public sector prisons. They get into the public prison system as well, member for Bassendean. In fact, two weeks ago there was a significant discovery of drugs, syringes and a mobile phone at Bunbury Regional Prison. Intelligence work paid off to find those things that had been smuggled into that prison. It happens in not only Serco-run prisons but all prisons. I am determined to do everything we can to ensure that contraband such as drugs and mobile phones do not get into the prisons in Western Australia.