

**CORRECTIVE SERVICES — GERALDTON ESCAPE**

*Statement by Minister for Corrective Services*

**MR J.M. FRANCIS (Jandakot — Minister for Corrective Services)** [9.13 am]: On 3 January 2014, two prisoners escaped from legal custody at Geraldton Regional Airport. This escape raised concerns about how decisions are made about the temporary transfer of offenders and the security and operational compliance of prisoner transport services. Today I table the executive summary of the investigation that the Commissioner for Corrective Services commissioned immediately after the escape. On the advice of the commissioner, I do not intend to release the entire report as this information may be exploited to endanger the security of prison officers, prisons and escort vehicles and help other offenders escape. The investigation found that: consistent with the policies in place at the time, one of the prisoners had been transferred to enable him to grieve with his family; Serco escort officers compromised the security features of a prisoner transport vehicle by opening the outer pod door for increased ventilation for the prisoners; and structural and design flaws enabled the prisoners to force open the inner door.

The investigation also found that the closed-circuit television monitoring system providing vision of the pods in the vehicle was working at the time of the escape. However, the digital video recording units fitted to the escort vehicle were not recording for a period of time leading up to and including the escape. The investigators concluded that the recording failure was most likely the result of a mechanical issue. The investigators agreed with the conclusions of the Corruption and Crime Commission that there was no evidence to suggest intentional interference with the CCTV monitoring system.

In response to the incident, the commissioner immediately ordered that until further notice all non-essential movements for prisoners in maximum security or with a high security escort requirement be submitted to the commissioner for approval; moved the court security and custodial service contract monitoring function to the adult custodial operational area of the department to enhance oversight and ensure systematic testing of critical Serco equipment; and ordered Serco to modify the pod doors of the vehicle fleet to guarantee their structural integrity. The commissioner will also create an assurance section in the office of reform as part of the organisational structural realignment and form an operations unit in adult justice services division to improve the coordination between operations and intelligence.

As members of the house would be aware, the Department of Corrective Services has reached a commercial settlement with Serco to recover costs. The total recovery and settlement cost is \$723 616, inclusive of goods and services tax.

I again acknowledge and apologise for the pain and anguish that this incident caused the victims.

[See paper 1362.]