

EASTERN GOLDFIELDS REGIONAL PRISON

350. Dr G.G. JACOBS to the Minister for Corrective Services:

Can the minister please update the house on the progress of works on an important infrastructure build in my electorate, the Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS replied:

I thank the member for Eyre for that question. I know that he has shown some support for a fresh approach to trying to intervene in the troubled lives of some people who present a risk to society, and I thank him for that support.

At the end of last year, the state entered into an agreement with Assure Partners Consortium in a public–private partnership arrangement for the design and development process for the new Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison. This new prison at the moment will cost around \$232 million. It will be a mixed-gender facility for both male and female prisoners and provide 250 beds in modern cells utilising the latest prison design. It is important that we all recognise that prisoners are sent to prison as a punishment in itself, and not for punishment. The current prison out in Kalgoorlie in the member for Eyre’s electorate is old and obviously passing its use-by date. It is important to provide a certain level of accommodation at a certain level of human decency if we want to provide offenders with the best possible chance of rehabilitation. Yesterday, I visited and inspected the prototype cells for the new Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison that will be built in Kalgoorlie. New designs in prison cells mean not only better comfort and better security for prisoners, but also better security for prison officers and those who have to work within the prison system. It also means a reduced ability for the self-harm of prisoners, and, very importantly, more sensitivities to cultural issues, especially amongst Aboriginal inmates. It is great to see the Department of Corrective Services planning in advance because it knows that prior preparation prevents poor performance. Designing and testing cell layouts, and also the equipment fitted into those cells, is the best way to get it right in advance, rather than having to make modifications after a prison is built.

In closing, I am looking forward to the start of earth and site works and construction up in the eastern goldfields in Kalgoorlie, scheduled to commence in August. Regardless of what the naysayers opposite have said, this project is on track, it is on time, it will commence in August as scheduled and I am looking forward to its start.