

CORRECTIVE SERVICES — PUPS IN PRISON PROGRAM

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

I refer to the media statement by the minister's predecessor, Hon Terry Redman, on 19 October 2011 when launching the Pups in Prison program at Wooroloo prison. The statement reads —

The Pups in Prisons program has the potential to improve behavioural problems among prisoners ...

- (1) In light of the escape of a hardened gun-toting drug dealer only three years into a 15-year sentence, does the minister agree with the view of his predecessor, Minister Redman?
- (2) What was this individual doing at a minimum-security prison so early into his sentence?

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

I thank the member for Warnbro for the question—I thought he had forgotten about me!

- (1)–(2) Do I support the Pups in Prison program? Do I support prisoners being rehabilitated by interacting with animals? Absolutely. Do I support prisoners who are perhaps closer to their release date being better prepared for release back into the community through interaction with animals or doing something worthwhile such as training potential guide dogs? Absolutely. Do I support section 95 prisoners working in the community, preparing war memorials, painting fire hydrants and building huts along park tracks out in the national parks? Absolutely. Do I support section 95 prisoners doing genuinely worthwhile work in the community to help them rehabilitate prior to their release? Of course I do. Do I think it was a smart move to allow someone who was three years into a 15-year sentence to be out in the community in such a way? Obviously not. I am not going to go into too much detail because obviously there is a significant investigation into the process of the decision-making on that matter. The key thing to take out of this is that there are hundreds and hundreds of policy directives within the Department of Corrective Services. We are getting on with the job of reviewing these and cleaning them up. It has been no secret that for the last 10 months the opposition has refused to admit there has been a problem in the Department of Corrective Services. I have been highlighting it and trying to lead a reform team. We have put in a new commissioner, who will review all of these policies. What have we done about this one? The short version is that there are about 794 minimum-security, section 95–eligible prisoners out of 5 000 in Western Australia. The Commissioner of Corrective Services immediately ordered a review of the classification for all of those 800-odd prisoners, of whom 22 have so far been reassessed and moved back up a classification.

**Mr P. Papalia:** Why was he in there?

**Mr J.M. FRANCIS:** My advice so far is that for three years he was essentially a model prisoner. He met all the criteria. I am questioning the criteria and as of that day the criteria have been reviewed. In order for a prisoner to be classified from a maximum-security prisoner down to a medium-security prisoner, or a medium-security prisoner down to a minimum-security prisoner, he must be halfway through his sentence and not convicted of child sex offences or recent violence offences. The classification of who is eligible was changed immediately. The 800-odd prisoners are being reassessed at the moment, and some have bounced back up a level. Commonsense tells us that someone that far into their sentence should not have been in a minimum-security prison.

**Mr W.J. Johnston** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Cannington, I call you to order for the first time. Minister, can you wind this up, please.

**Mr J.M. FRANCIS:** We are getting on with the job of reforming the Department of Corrective Services. It is a significant challenge that is decades overdue. We are getting on with this reform to help make the community safer, whether opposition members like it or not.