

DANGEROUS SEX OFFENDERS — GPS TRACKING DEVICES

155. Mr M. McGOWAN to the Minister for Corrective Services:

I refer to the release of the violent serial rapist TJD because of the GPS monitoring policy that this government introduced and that the minister personally promoted through a publicity stunt shortly after being sworn in.

- (1) Is the minister aware that his predecessor, Hon Terry Redman, said at the time of the introduction of the relevant laws, “Yes, it’s possible that it could increase the number of dangerous sex offenders that are released”?
- (2) Does the release of this violent rapist now confirm that the minister knew that violent sex offenders were going to be released?
- (3) Why did the minister proceed with this operational policy for repeat serial sex offenders when he knew this would happen?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS replied:

- (1)–(3) Let me make it crystal clear. The use of GPS technology is not an extra consideration that should be used by the judiciary when releasing someone. There are 5 100 people in prison, behind bars, in Western Australia today. Almost every single one of them—the overwhelming majority—will one day most likely be released back into the community whether they have been convicted of a minor or a significant offence. Bar very few exceptions and some who will pass away in custody, almost every single one of them will eventually be released. I do not decide how long the detention period is or how long someone spends in custody; that decision is made independently of the executive.

Mrs M.H. Roberts interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Midland, I call you to order for the first time.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: It is made by the judiciary, by judges —

Mr F.M. Logan interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Cockburn, I call you to order for the second time.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: It is made by the judiciary and by judges. It is not made by the executive. Almost every one of those people behind bars will eventually be released. I support GPS tracking technology. It is wonderful that we embrace it, and it is embraced across many different jurisdictions around the country. Both Labor and Liberal governments have embraced this because it is an added layer of protection for the community. Although it has its limitations, it is an extra tool that can be used—

An opposition member interjected.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: You say he said it. I do not believe what you say, but that is okay.

The SPEAKER: Minister, please direct your answer through the Chair.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: It has its limitations. It is an extra tool that we use to help preserve the safety of the community. In the case of this particular offender, right now he is being monitored live 24/7 with a location accuracy of less than a couple of metres. We know where he is and we use that as a tool to ensure that he adheres to as many as possible of the other 43 conditions of his release. There is the additional penalty that mandatory sentencing again comes in if he tampers with that device. If he cuts it off his bracelet, it will trigger a break in a fibre optic chain in the bracelet that will be relayed within seconds to the monitoring unit, and he will be put back behind bars.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Warnbro, I call you to order for the second time.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: The point is that GPS technology is an extra tool, an added layer of security, to protect the public. It is wonderful that we use those things to help provide that additional layer of protection to the people of Western Australia.