

PRISON ESCAPE STATISTICS

**161. Mr J.M. FRANCIS to the Minister for Corrective Services:**

I will start by wishing all our friends in New South Wales all the best for a successful state election on Saturday! I suspect the Premier is about to have another friend in the Council of Australian Governments! Another socialist government falls!

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Thank you, members! I have an expectation that I am going to hear a question, not a statement about other things, member for Jandakot. I just want to hear the question.

**Mr P.B. Watson:** Aren't you the bloke that Abbott sacked?

**Mr J.M. FRANCIS:** The member has all his friends up there, doesn't he?

Several members interjected.

**Mr J.M. FRANCIS:** My question is to the Minister for Corrective Services. Minister, it is great that this government is committed to the safety and security of communities surrounding prisons, and I know just how much work has gone into keeping prisoners in prisons.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Thank you, members.

**Ms M.M. Quirk:** Preamble!

**The SPEAKER:** Take a seat, member.

**Mr T.G. Stephens:** Next question!

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Jandakot, I want to hear a question—it is very simple; it is very straightforward. I do not want to hear anything else, otherwise I will give the question to somebody else, member for Jandakot.

Opposition members: Hear, hear!

**The SPEAKER:** I do not need to hear anybody else in this place either. The member for Jandakot has the call.

**Mr J.M. FRANCIS:** Can the minister please update the house on prison escape figures since the Liberal–National government has taken office?

**Mr D.T. REDMAN replied:**

I thank the member for Jandakot very much for his question.

Indeed, I would like to update the house on the figures. The shadow minister recently asked me a question about someone having been on the roof of a prison, and I guess the implication was that we are not doing the right thing about what happens in prisons.

Several members interjected.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** We can look at what has happened over the past 10 years.

**Mr E.S. Ripper:** Tell us about Mr Noble.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** I am happy to if the Leader of the Opposition asks me a question on it.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Members!

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** There has been a trend, over the past 10 years, in the number of unlawful absences from custody, but when we look at the trend under the Liberal–National government, there have been some particularly good outcomes in our capacity to maintain security for the community of Western Australia.

It seems that under the former Labor government—unlike schools—staying in prisons was actually optional, because there seems to have been a significant number of people who simply were not kept where they should be. It is interesting to look closely at the figures over the time that the Labor Party was in charge. In 2003–04, under Labor, the rate of escapees per 100 prisoners was 2.1, and under this Liberal–National government it is 0.32—a significant reduction in the amount of unlawful absences from custody. There are a heap of reasons for that, not the least of which is a more comprehensive assessment of prisoner security ratings, and the stricter criteria used to ensure that prisoners are in the correct facility.

**Mr P.B. Watson:** They don't want to escape because they can't afford their power bills! It's too expensive outside! They want to stay there; it's easier!

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Albany, if you want to ask a question in this place, I will always give you the call—you know that—but at this stage I am formally going to call you to order for the first time.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** I just wanted to point out a couple of reasons—I have highlighted two. The last two relate to providing structured activities at key times of the year such as Christmas and Easter and so on, which is an important time for prisoners and a time of some tension. We are also introducing an intelligence-focused security plan across all prisons. I think it is also important that we look at the history of prisoner transport under the Labor government. In 2003–04 a particularly significant number of people escaped custody. If we look at the record of the Liberal–National government over the past few years, we see that the figure is zero.

I took the time to read a 2004 news bulletin from *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

**Mr F.M. Logan** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Cockburn!

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** At that time the justice minister was Hon Michelle Roberts, and, in response to nine prisoners having escaped in 2004, she said that all dangerous prisoners required to appear at the Supreme Court would now be accompanied by heavily armed guards—that is good! She also went on to push for prisoners attending court having to do so in their inmate uniforms. I am assuming that that was so that when they were running down the streets, they could identify them and get them back and put them where they belong! The Liberal–National government is committed to community safety and will continue to support the Department of Corrective Services in reducing the number of unlawful escapes.