

YOUTH DETENTION FACILITY — CASUARINA PRISON

Statement by Minister for Corrective Services

MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington — Minister for Corrective Services) [1.25 pm]: I rise to inform the house of the recent transfer of a complex cohort of young offenders from Banksia Hill Detention Centre to a newly gazetted, temporary youth detention facility. I ordered the gazettal under section 13 of the Young Offenders Act to allow for a standalone unit at Casuarina Prison to be designated as a youth detention centre and operate as an extension of Banksia Hill.

I can inform the house that I did not take this decision lightly. I have worked with the leadership of the Department of Justice throughout this year as it sought to manage a cohort of young offenders who have shown unprecedented levels of violent behaviour. I met with the representative union leadership and staff, and heard how difficult and unsafe the working environment has become for staff. I want to take a moment to acknowledge the hardworking, dedicated staff we have working at our youth detention centres and throughout the wider custodial and justice system. They do difficult jobs in tough circumstances and I commend their efforts.

The ongoing violence and destruction that continued to be exhibited by this small cohort of young offenders was also having a negative impact on other young detainees, who would often have to be confined to their units while an incident was responded to. Ultimately, I was not prepared to have the rehabilitation and education of the other detainees continue to be impacted in this way. Therefore, I made the decision to relocate the detainees to a safer and more secure place because of their sustained and unprecedented destruction of living quarters and infrastructure, and attacks on staff.

The temporary centre is separate from the rest of Casuarina Prison and detainees accommodated there will have no contact with adult prisoners. Support provided includes education and programs, and cultural, medical and psychological services, which are all delivered onsite by experienced Banksia Hill and youth justice staff. The detainees will also have access to secure recreation facilities. Detainees are being regularly assessed and will return to Banksia Hill once the multidisciplinary team makes the decision that it is safe to do so. Meanwhile, the \$25 million upgrades to Banksia Hill that I have previously announced will be expedited to enable the return of detainees from the temporary centre when it is appropriate to do so.