

BANKSIA HILL DETENTION CENTRE — REFORM

430. Mr S.N. AUBREY to the Premier:

Before I ask my question, I acknowledge two students from St Mary's Anglican Girls' School in my electorate who are doing work experience—Olivia Lingham and Anna Mackie—and are in the gallery today.

My question is to the Premier. I refer to the Cook Labor government's commitment to addressing Western Australia's long-term youth detention needs. Can the Premier outline to the house what steps are being taken to improve safety, security and welfare at Banksia Hill Detention Centre?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

I would like to acknowledge all the young adults who are in the gallery today. I met some of the young leaders from Joseph Banks Secondary College earlier. It is great to see them here, looking at our Parliament, because young people are our future. This state provides many great opportunities for young people to take advantage of our great lifestyle and everything that this state has to offer.

But we have to acknowledge that some kids are confronted by complex issues and that they miss out on those opportunities as a result of those complex issues. That is the reason, from time to time, it is necessary to detain juveniles who have repeatedly perpetrated very serious and frequently violent crimes. For this reason, they need to be separated from the wider community to ensure a more intensive program to get them back on an even keel and bring them back into community life to live rewarding and exciting lives. That is the reason we have undertaken the decisions we have announced today in relation to Banksia Hill Detention Centre. This morning, I joined the Minister for Corrective Services, Paul Papalia, to announce a plan for Banksia Hill. Above all else, a consistent message of this government is that we want to continue to make Banksia Hill safe for the staff and safe for the juveniles who are in that facility. That is our number one priority. Once the facility is safe and secure, we will be able to properly engage young people in rehabilitation, education and positive activities. It is important to note that these changes will not happen overnight as they are complex issues, but we are confident of the trajectory that we are now on in relation to the situation we have at Banksia Hill.

Firstly, we are taking immediate action to improve safety, security and welfare at Banksia Hill. That involves additional prison officers to provide greater security, which will enable youth custodial officers to focus on rehabilitation, mentoring and delivering the programs that we want to see brought to life in that facility. Legislative changes will be brought in to enable this, as well as specialised training and working with children checks for prison officers employed at the centre. The additional staff will improve the safety and security of those in detention and increase their out-of-cell hours. Consultation has begun with Indigenous leaders in the community who will provide advice as a new model of care is adopted. We have listened to feedback from Aboriginal community members to enable the elders in that community to help. As part of this, Aboriginal mediators are being engaged to assist with the mentoring and safe resolution of critical incidents. In addition, the Department of Justice will appoint an Aboriginal health service to provide culturally appropriate care for young people at the facility. Discussions are also underway with the Telethon Kids Institute to provide expertise and advice into a range of neurodevelopmental issues such as foetal alcohol spectrum disorder. This will help to inform a model of care for each individual's needs. I have been at pains to point that out. Each kid there has their own story and their own complex reasons for finding themselves in this position. We need to make this facility safe and we need to employ a therapeutic model of care to make sure that we can give these kids the best possible start in life. We will continue to make sure that we work to understand what the best infrastructure needs for this facility are, whether it is part of that facility or elsewhere, whether it is in remand or other suitable services. In an ideal world, no juvenile would be in detention, but we do not live in an ideal world; we live in the real world. There are juveniles who require intervention and temporary separation from the community. There are very complex and varied reasons for this. We want Banksia Hill Detention Centre to be a world-leading institution for juvenile detention and rehabilitation.

I commend the Minister for Corrective Services for the work he has done so far and I know we will do more. A lot of it is leading from the work already done by this government and the previous minister. We will continue to make sure that we do everything we can to make this facility safe for the staff and the detainees and, above all else, we will work with the community to make sure that we bring new models of care with these services because we know that we can make sure these kids will live happy, rewarding lives in the community, and they just need assistance to get there.