

YOUTH DETENTION — SUICIDE AND SELF-HARM ATTEMPTS

74. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Minister for Corrective Services:

I have a supplementary question. Can I confirm that the minister's first answer was yes, he believes that his government is keeping these 37 juveniles safe, despite —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please! Members, I would like to hear the supplementary in silence. Short and sharp, please.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Can I confirm that the minister believes that his government is keeping these 37 juveniles safe, despite 25 of them engaging in serious self-harm and attempted suicide?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON replied:

What I have said is that we do not choose who comes into corrective custody. They are chosen by the courts. The courts tell us that these young offenders have to be managed inside the corrective services estate. It is unfortunate, in my view, that the courts determine that these young offenders are criminally responsible for their behaviour because, let me tell the member, it would be a lot easier to manage the corrective estate if they in fact decided that they were mentally incapacitated and then the Minister for Health; Mental Health would need to deal with these young offenders, but the courts determine they need to be managed inside the corrective estate. What we do is provide psychologists, psychiatrists, mental health nurses, doctors, Aboriginal support workers and education. We provide every service that anybody in the community has asked for. I remind members that we have hired a unit of eight specifically Aboriginal people—because the majority, 80 or 75 per cent, of the detainees are Aboriginal—to work with them on cultural issues. We are doing everything people have asked for.

I have a question for the member, and it is pretty simple. What has to happen here? The Liberal and National Parties say that the solution is to build a new facility. They say that that is the solution, but what should we do in the five years between now and then? This is how stupid the comment is. This is typical of the Liberal and National Parties. Their election commitment of \$250 million at the next election will not help their communities; they will be replacing Banksia Hill. Five years after they make the commitment, the new facility will be opened. What should we do in the meantime? We have to spend the \$100 million the Treasurer and Premier have allocated to the corrective services fund. We have to get Banksia Hill right now. We cannot wait five years for some nirvana—some world that will never exist—because we have to deal with the challenges now. I do not apologise, ever, for making my three priorities this order: priority number one, protect the community; priority number two, protect the staff; and priority number three, provide a therapeutic environment so that these violent young offenders can get off their offending behaviour and become citizens who make a contribution to the community. Every time I get attacked for those three priorities, it shows that the people who are criticising me are not in touch with the community.