

BANKSIA HILL DETENTION CENTRE — *FOUR CORNERS* REPORT

**692. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Premier:**

I refer to findings in the *Four Corners* program “Locking Up Kids” that suggest that Banksia Hill Detention Centre has been plagued with dysfunction and riots, with conditions worsening in the last 12 months, noting that the centre is, at times, dangerously understaffed, a fact reinforced by findings of the Inspector of Custodial Services. I also refer to the Premier’s assertion on ABC Perth this morning that it is working incredibly well and that Banksia Hill is working effectively. Does he stand by those comments?

**Mr M. McGOWAN replied:**

Yes, I do. We have employed an additional 68 staff. Another 19 are undergoing training currently. They are being rolled out into Banksia Hill as we speak to ensure that it can be managed effectively. What has happened is this: 95 young people are in detention there. A lot of them, as I said before, have had very difficult upbringings. They have had potentially dysfunctional home lives. Some of them have some mental health issues. In order to go to Banksia Hill, as I will outline to the Leader of the Opposition again, they have normally been through the justice system on a lot of occasions. Break and enters, aggravated burglaries, stealing cars and assaulting other people are the sorts of offences. Sometimes it is arson and sometimes it is sexual assault; sometimes it is worse. So they end up in Banksia Hill. Of the cohort of young people who are there at the moment, 95 or thereabouts have been sentenced to be detained for any period of time. Of those 95, 85 are participating in educational programs, recreational programs, music programs and welfare and other programs. Roughly 90 per cent are participating effectively, but 10 have not been. Those 10 have been assaulting guards. They have assaulted the youth custodial officers scores of times. Sometimes when they have been released into the recreation areas, they have assaulted other detainees. Then they have destroyed their cells, so we have had to find somewhere else for them while we fix their cells, at the minimum. The only place that is available to us to place them is the so-called unit 18, which is separate from adult prisoners. They cannot see the adult prisoners. It is staffed and it provides a range of services similar to those available at Banksia Hill, but they need to be more carefully managed, because when they are released from their cells into the yard, particularly if they are in a group, they may well attack a youth custodial officer again or try to escape. It needs more careful management. The 85 who are in Banksia are participating in all the programs and it is running well.

I think that is a statement of the obvious. I know there is a lot of gnashing of teeth and a lot of people do not want detention. They do not want detention—full stop. I saw the journalist say at the start of last night’s program that there should not be detention. I saw her say it at the start. That is the position she started from. When the program was created, that is what it said. If someone sexually assaults another person, commits multiple aggravated burglaries in which they beat people up in their homes, burns down someone’s house or steals a car and drives it at high speed at police officers, I just do not agree with the idea that there cannot be a consequence. Members opposite are arguing this over and again. They need to understand what we are dealing with. When they were in office, they had a bit more sense about these things. They moved 70—not 10—into Hakea Prison, which had asbestos. That is what they did when they were in office. We did not attack them over it, because the cells were destroyed. What other option did they have? It is incredible that members opposite take up this argument in this way.

We are doing our best in a difficult situation. A lot of people out there are very idealistic, and good on them, but we have to deal with the actual practicalities of dealing with a group of people who have caused a lot of disruption and a lot of pain. I will tell members another example. Danny Hodgson was punched at Perth train station by a 15-year-old and suffered brain damage. According to the people I saw on the program last night, that perpetrator should not be incarcerated. I disagree with that.