

PAROLE AND COURT ORDERS, SUPERVISION

67. Mr J.B. D'ORAZIO to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services; Justice; Community Safety:

I refer to the supervision of offenders on parole and court orders. Will the minister advise of any important developments in this area?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS replied:

I thank the member for Ballajura for his question. This is clearly a very important area for government and the community. The supervision of offenders who are on court and early release orders in the community is absolutely essential, and this Government takes it very seriously indeed. Those on such orders need to be supervised and monitored, first and foremost, for community safety. However, we also need to do something about the important role of addressing issues that have led to the past behaviour. This area was severely neglected by the former Government in its eight years in office. In fact, shortly after we came to office in 2001, the Auditor General brought down a report in May 2001 that gave quite a fascinating insight into the former Government's attitude towards offender management. That Auditor General's report said, among other things, that there was an understaffed and poorly trained work force that was managing high case loads; that there was a failure to both adequately fund and deliver offender programs; and that inconsistent and poor breach processes had been put in place.

Since coming to government, we have taken action to turn around that situation. We have employed an additional 55 permanent community corrections officers; we have introduced mandatory training; we have spent nearly \$2 million on offender programs; and we have created a new, centralised breach unit. In addition to that, we have created a professional practice and standards unit. Our attitude to all these matters stands in marked contrast to the attitude of those opposite. For example, I refer to the recent incident that led to the Skinner report, which I tabled in this House, and the way in which we reacted quickly to that. People should look at the way in which those opposite reacted when there was a similar incident back in 1998. They had a report done too; it was done by Les Smith. The only reason that people in this place have not heard about that report, as they heard about the Skinner report, is that those opposite never tabled it. It is one of those reports that they swept under the carpet and did nothing about. That was in 1998. Some three years later there was the scathing Auditor General's report, because they had not acted on the Les Smith report. That stands in stark contrast to the actions we have taken since coming to government in being open, accountable and up front about the difficulties that were raised in the Skinner report. We have taken action and put programs in place to ensure best possible offender management.