

RIVERBANK PRISON — COMMUNITY WORK MANAGEMENT UNIT

228. Mr F.A. ALBAN to the Minister for Corrective Services:

I know that the Minister for Corrective Services is committed to increasing the completion rates of community work orders. Can the minister inform the house how the opening of the community work management unit at the Riverbank facility will build upon the government's successes?

Mr C.C. PORTER replied:

I thank the member for his question. It was last Wednesday that I opened the community work management unit at the Riverbank facility. It was a great and very exciting day, because it forms part of this government's overarching strategy to do two things in respect of community work: firstly, to ensure that it is vigorously enforced, and, secondly, to ensure that the work is purposeful and that the people performing community work derive as much benefit from it as possible in terms of skills and training. I have spoken previously in this place about the fact that when we took government, we inherited a community work completion rate of 54 per cent, which was the lowest of anywhere in Australia. It has been an absolute priority for this government to lift that rate, and that is what we have been doing. We have gone back to the very basic measure of community work, which is what we call the "weekly compliance rate"—that is, in essence, a measure of the people who are turning up on the day that they are supposed to do the things the court has ordered them to do. We have broken down every one of the Department of Corrective Services areas that manage community work and ranked them against each other. We look at the percentage of hours worked against hours required, and when we compare and contrast them, we have them competing against each other, and we ensure better performance from the ones that are not performing. We see some absolutely fantastic results. The member for Mandurah will be glad to hear that last week we had a percentage compliance rate in Mandurah of 63.4 per cent; that is the rate of people on community work orders turning up to do what they are supposed to do. That is very good. I advise the member for Kalgoorlie that the rate there is 33.9 per cent; we have a little work to do out there, but we are certainly working on it. Regional compliance is an issue that we have to work hard on.

Something quite remarkable happened in the member for Fremantle's electorate.

Several members interjected.

I think she will find this very interesting. In the seven days from 20 to 27 March, 140.5 hours of community work were required in Fremantle and 141 hours were completed. That gives the member for Fremantle's electorate a completion rate of 100.4 per cent. There are people in Fremantle who are doing community work that the court has not ordered them to do. I asked my department about this, and I do not think that has ever happened in the history of this state. It means, fellow members, that in January 2008 the community work compliance rate was 30 per cent. On 31 March 2010 it was 60 per cent. In two years of collecting the data and of encouraging departmental officers to come along, compare, compete and go through it, we have doubled the rate of community compliance. Is that not remarkable? In fact, at first, I found the daily charts quite tedious, but it is now like footy tipping for me; it is the best thing that happens to me in a week. I go through and I —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Thank you, members.

Mr C.C. PORTER: I would expect that from the other side of the house. It is classic Labor Party policy: why bother to achieve anything practical when you can dream and pontificate and do other things? It is very exciting.

Riverbank Detention Centre was opened 50 years ago as a male juvenile detention facility. In fact, for a very short time, a very famous rock star from Fremantle was domiciled in Riverbank. For 50 years it was used for different purposes, but for seven years this fantastic facility lay dormant with rubbish piling up. We have completely upgraded the former administration and cell blocks and moved 240 cubic metres of detritus and debris from the place. It is up and running perfectly. It has a gallery exhibiting artworks, mechanical workshops, a spray-painting booth and refurbished carpentry shops. Nineteen adult offenders were presented with a White Card in the construction industry; 54 offenders received trade painting and decorating certificates of participation and 91 adult offenders participated in the same course. Fifty-four of those sat their White Card safety assessment. What is happening there is functioning community work in what was basically a dump. That is remarkable and I am sure all the house will agree that it is a quite exciting initiative.