

COMMUNITY-BASED ORDERS

227. Mr M.J. BIRNEY to the Minister for Justice:

The Minister for Community Development is wondering why she has been moved from the front bench to the back bench, but I think she has just made the reason pretty obvious.

I refer the minister to the Auditor General's report on community-based orders, released yesterday, which found that 40 per cent of offenders simply do not complete their order, and to the Auditor General's view that the reliance on non-permanent community correction officers has risen, increasing the risks of less skilled case management and lower rates of successful completion of sentences. Given that more than half of the 109 substantive community correction officers in the system are actually acting in other positions within the department, is the minister really surprised that 40 per cent of offenders are not completing their sentences? Is it true that mismanagement and staff disarray within the department are the real reasons that so many offenders are getting away with their crimes?

Mr J.B. D'ORAZIO replied:

I am so thankful that the Leader of the Opposition has given me another chance. The Leader of the Opposition has said that he read the report today. Did he read the report released yesterday or the one released in 2001? If he read the report, he would not have the face or the audacity to ask me the question. Does he understand what yesterday's report said? If he had read the report, he would know that the Auditor General is saying that the improvement that has occurred since we have come to government has been nothing short of sensational. We have appointed 55 extra staff to look after this area and 16 other supervisors. In the previous term of government the time it took for one of those people to be breached was on average 160 days; it is now 21 days. Does the Leader of the Opposition also understand that we cannot control who gets placed on a community order? The facts are that 60 per cent of the people do comply and are able to complete their punishment within the community.

I cannot believe that the Leader of the Opposition has asked this question. The Leader of the Opposition is an absolute joke. The Leader of the Opposition should read the report. The Auditor General's report gave credit to the government and was a vote of confidence in the previous Ministers for Justice, the member for Midland and the member for Fremantle. The changes that have been made over the past four years have meant that community service orders now operate properly. Members of the previous government did not know what was going on in their day. The Auditor General told the previous government about the issue, but it did bugger-all about it. Members opposite must remember the letters "FA" because that is what the previous government did about the issue.