COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND JUSTICE STANDING COMMITTEE

Fourth Report — "Interim Report — 'Making our Prisons Work': An Inquiry into the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Prisoner Education, Training and Employment Strategies" — Tabling

MS A.J.G. MacTIERNAN (Armadale) [11.27 am]: I present for tabling the fourth report of the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee's "Interim Report — 'Making our Prisons Work': An Inquiry into the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Prisoner Education, Training and Employment Strategies".

[See paper 2249.]

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: Today I present this report on behalf of the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee. This inquiry has been underway for some six months and the committee has decided to produce a report on prison industries in prison employment activity as we are aware that there is current consideration of these issues within the Department of Corrective Services. Therefore, the committee believed that we should ensure that the results of our deliberations were available to help shape any direction that might be taken in this regard. I ask that members note that this report does not ask the government to spend vast sums of money, rather, it seeks to unleash the opportunities for financially self-sustaining enterprises within our prisons; enterprises that indeed would create better outcomes for all concerned.

In our community we punish people who break the law with imprisonment. We do this to retain a sense of order and justice and a belief that this in turn acts as a deterrent. The role of prison as a deterrent is of course somewhat questionable because we have a 40 per cent recidivism rate; that is, 40 per cent of prisoners exiting the system recommit offences within two years. Regrettably, within the Indigenous population that recidivism rate is about 60 per cent. When we hear that, there is almost an instinctive view that the answer is to make prisons harsher places. But the evidence tells us that it is the prisons that offer prisoners an opportunity to rebuild psychologically that produce the real results, with a reduction is recidivism rates and, thereby, an improvement in community safety. So we must be prepared to look very logically at the evidence of what works and what does not work within our prison system.

I must say that I changed my view about prisons somewhat as a result of this inquiry. I do not see prisons necessarily as an unmitigated but necessary evil. Indeed, there is some evidence that prisons can provide for prisoners an environment in which, very often for the first time in their lives, they are free from a chaotic life, they are free from drugs, and they are free from dysfunctional relationships. The structure and discipline that is provided in the prison system, combined with the direction and support that is provided by prison staff, often gives prisoners the opportunity to get on top of the dysfunction that led them to offend.

Mr C.J. Barnett: I agree. It can give stability to people.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: Yes. It can give them stability, structure and order, in an environment in which they are encouraged to do better and are given the wherewithal to get on top of the problems that they face.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Including a regular and good diet.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: I am sure a regular and good diet is very much part of it.

I am digressing here from the text of my speech, but one of the things that all the members of the committee were surprised by when we went into the prisons was how normal the prisoners are. They are just like the people we would meet in the community. Indeed, most of the prisoners whom we met are very engaging individuals. They are human beings who want to utilise the opportunities that they are provided with in the prison system to get employment and to improve their education and their understanding. That was an overwhelming sense that we got, certainly in the facilities that we visited at Roebourne, Bandyup and Casuarina. The vast majority of prisoners are released back into the community. We can protect our society best by doing what we can to improve the prisoners' prospects of becoming law-abiding citizens upon their re-entry into society. Equipping prisoners with employment skills is an important part of that process.

At the same time, we need to be very conscious of the financial burden to the community of the growing prisoner numbers. Each prisoner costs taxpayers around $100 000 a year to maintain. There are in the order of 4 400 prisoners in our prison system. That is a budget of in excess of $440 million per annum just to maintain prisoners. In addition to that, the government is spending $655 million on expanding prison facilities.

At the same time, there is chronic underemployment of prisoners. These prisoners could be making a contribution to their upkeep and developing workplace skills that will give them a chance to lead productive lives upon their release. It is interesting. The official statistics say that 77 per cent of eligible prisoners are

employed. That might be correct. But what does "employed" mean? Our observations of prisons were consistent with the findings of the Inspector of Custodial Services, Professor Neil Morgan. He advised the committee that apart from working in prison kitchens, which often require prisoners to work a long day, it is rare to find prisoners in public prisons who work more than three or four hours a day. Even three to four hours is not always the norm. As Professor Morgan explained, in a number of prisons, some people are employed for relatively short periods—for example, to clean a residential unit. That job may in the past have taken someone two hours to do. But because of the reality of overcrowding, these jobs are now often split between two prisoners, so they share these jobs. Professor Morgan found that in Hakea Prison, 43 per cent of prisoners were not employed at all, and 23 per cent were given menial, short-duration tasks. That is, of course, an enormous waste of capacity in enabling prisoners to make a positive construction to their upkeep. It is also an enormous waste of capacity in enabling prisoners to develop a workplace culture and skills that will give a much better opportunity of being employed and productive citizens upon their release.

This problem is not new in Western Australian prisons. With the exception of some excellent facilities for self-provisioning, particularly in the food preparation and kitchen areas, there has been a chronic underinvestment in prison industries. That has lead to massive underemployment and loss of opportunity to defray prisons costs and provide useful workplace skills. Indeed, as Professor Morgan has said, the norm in our prisons should be that prisoners are engaged in six hours of productive work a day so that they can develop a workplace culture. That is also very important in facilitating the development of proper management strategies within our prisons. We all know that the environment within prisons is tough. Occupied prisoners are much easier to manage. The vast majority of prisoners want to work. However, unfortunately, because of this chronic underinvestment in prison industries, and also because the custodial services function and the prison industry function are combined, rather than differentiated, and basically operate within the same structure, we have not taken advantage of the opportunities that other jurisdictions have been able to take advantage of.

This problem has been exacerbated by the rapid growth in prison numbers. That has led to a greater rationing of work and of training and education. Time and time again when we visited the prisons, be it Roebourne, Bandyup or Casuarina, the prisoners talked to us about their desire to be given greater opportunity to work, greater opportunity to learn and greater opportunity to acquire skills. The potential is enormous, but we simply do not have the necessary structures and the necessary investment in place to enable that to be done. That is not to say that prison staff are not making some very valiant attempts to achieve these aims. Our committee places on record our respect for the dedication of the many people in the prison system who are working to create opportunities for prisoners to rebuild their lives. But they are constrained by the lack of employment and training facilities, let alone facilities that in any way, shape or form could be described as contemporary and reflect the work environments that people would find outside of the prison system.

One extraordinary example is the vocational training facility for Roebourne Prison. That facility is located some 15 kilometres from the prison at what is known as DECCA Station. I will not go into the detail of why it is called DECCA Station, member for Pilbara. We could only describe that facility as primitive. It is very much a facility that has been neglected. However, an enormous work culture is being developed through the links that the staff in that facility have established with industry. The staff have shown such preparedness to go out and be creative to try to get private sector engagement, to make up for the fact that the facilities they have on offer are pretty primitive. Rio Tinto, in particular, must be acknowledged for its role in providing a well-structured, pre-release work skills program that has been highly sought after because it offers real prospects of employment post-release. Rio needs a special acknowledgment for the effort it is putting in. Several smaller companies are constructively engaged in providing prisoners opportunities in Roebourne, and I hope more can be brought on board.

The prisoners wanted to learn more, and they approached us and asked whether we could help them get access to earthmoving equipment, because all they can work on is forklifts and bobcats, and these, of course, are not the skill sets required in the mining industry in the north west, which is where their target employment is.

WA prisons need to adopt and restructure the prison system to create a separate, focused, professional entity that can leverage private and public investment to create contemporary, self-sustaining industries, or, even better, industries that will ensure that the employment and training endeavours are not cannibalised by the financial pressures on the custodial services. We saw, for example, prisons in Singapore, where their desire to ensure that the projects they offer are providing contemporary skills is such that they have set up digital multimedia as a prison industry and contractual arrangements are in place whereby prisoners provide these services to the private sector. The Singapore model has much to offer, and I think we need to look at the results of a whole multifaceted approach. I know that my colleagues will continue on the work started in this report, and their final report will be about the other very, very positive rehabilitative measures in Singapore. But certainly the role of prison industry, the role of providing work and training and pre-release employment programs has been very, very instructive,

and it is very much part of the success of that quite incredible reduction in recidivism from 40 per cent to 25 per cent.

How have they done that? They have an entity called SCORE—Singapore Corporation of Rehabilitative Enterprises—that enters into a whole variety of contractual relationships with the private sector, which often actually invests in the machinery provided by the prison. In many cases they provide a blank canvas in terms of an allocation of space and the private sector provides the equipment and the training for that operation. This organisation operates with very profound cooperation with the prison staff and prison management, and indeed there is often lateral recruitment.

New South Wales has a somewhat different model but the principle of creating a separate entity is the same. It is a separating out and acknowledgment that there needs to be a special focus on creating prison industries, and that it is not just something that can be lumped in with the custodial services obligations of the various prison directors. A separate entity has to be created, which has happened in New South Wales. It is not a separate statutory entity; it is an entity within the departmental structure. It, likewise, has presented some extraordinary opportunities. For example Corrective Service Industries in New South Wales makes curtains for the private sector; it is a very big operation. It, somewhat notoriously, revamped the headsets for Qantas. It goes out and aggressively creates industries that compete with the private sector and attract the private sector investment to enable it to ensure that it has the capacity to continue to be able to provide jobs and skills for prisoners, as well as reducing the impost on the taxpayer. Both SCORE and CSI are not only able to fund the operations and capital investments that may be necessary, but they also fund employment and vocational training, and generate surpluses. They are extraordinary models, and Western Australia needs one because there is a constant tension between money that needs to be directed away from employment and training into the very basic needs of custodial services. If we can implement a separate entity that is responsible for creatively engaging with the private sector, creating these employment opportunities, and retaining those funds to create a self-sustaining entity, the burden on the taxpayer will be reduced, and a result will be produced that is so much better for prisoner outcomes and, ultimately, community safety.

I want to thank my committee and say how much I have appreciated sharing this journey of discovery with them all, and I have seen how deep the commitment to build a stronger committee across the political divide is. I have really enjoyed my time with that committee and it is with considerable sadness that I stand down from that position. I thank Dr Brian Gordon, our executive officer, for so relentlessly and professionally facilitating our work and for sharing our enthusiasm in this and other projects. I thank Jovita Hogan and all of the other staff for their efforts, and thanks to Liz Kerr, who has helped us in the past few days.

Again, to the many people inside and outside government who work so hard in the tough environment of the prison world, we really hope this report may help get things right.

MR A.P. JACOB (Ocean Reef) [11.47 am]: I rise to make a few comments on the interim report that we are bringing down today. Personally, I found this more engaging than any topic we have tackled so far as a committee. This is an area of inquiry, I believe, that has huge potential benefits for inmates, for the state government, and for the community at large. A range of opportunities have been identified in this report, one of them being, as the committee's chair touched on, that the prisoners are, in many cases, in the right place. They are there and they have an opportunity to make the most of where they are. Being in prison, in many cases, is actually the right place for these people, and it is the right place for us to start to work with them. At the same time, we can do a lot of things to reduce the financial and social burden on the state government and community at large. The title of the report is quite significant and we had a number of discussions about that as a committee. The title is "Making our Prisons Work", which was very much the intent and thrust of the inquiry, which is why we went with that title and not the subheading, which is "An Inquiry into the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Prisoner Education, Training and Employment Strategies".

Throughout the process I had some concerns about the report being an interim report, which I discussed during committee deliberations a number of times. My concerns were mainly based around the fact that an interim report somewhat left it open for the report to perhaps be defined more by its timing than its findings and recommendations. That would be a great pity because a lot of good work has gone into this report so far, and it would be a missed opportunity if it was to be in any way disregarded, misread or overshadowed by that. Although there were some philosophical differences on that issue as the committee went into it, I believe that we steered around them well in the committee process and that is reflected in the findings and recommendations that report contains.

The recommendations, I believe, head in what is the absolutely right direction. As I said during debate on justice reinvestment last week, I believe we all want to see far lower recidivism and a lower crime rate overall, which will lead to lower rates of imprisonment. I think we just sometimes disagree on the best way to go about that, but

the committee process has the potential to be a very good way to tackle that question and to do it in a less confrontational way than matters are often discussed and worked out in the chamber. We all also want to see that those who have found themselves in our penal system use it as an opportunity, and we use it as an opportunity, to ensure that they do not end up back in there if at all possible.

The key recommendations of this report are, firstly, to significantly expand prison industries in partnership with the private sector. In doing this, we would create a statutory trading enterprise or a semiautonomous trading enterprise to run all employment and industry initiatives in prisons, working collaboratively with the Department of Corrective Services. We have recommended returning profits to the development of workshops and other employment and training-related rehabilitation initiatives, which is not far removed from the principle of justice reinvestment. The prisoners are sent back into the prison workshops as opposed to the community at large. We are also encouraging, where possible, private sector involvement —

Mr P. Papalia: It is part of it. It is both.

Mr A.P. JACOB: Yes. Sometimes the discussion on justice reinvestment gets a bit clouded because of the definition.

Mr P. Papalia: The minister is trying to suggest it is only one part of it.

Mr A.P. JACOB: The definition is a bit ambiguous, so it is not always clear what we are arguing on that one.

We are encouraging private sector involvement in getting ex-prisoners in employment, both pre and post-release, and we are recommending the expansion of the existing prisoner employment program. These recommendations are essentially based on the Singaporean model—as a committee, we visited Singapore—and the New South Wales model, which we have collected a range of information about. The research officers have also spoken with a number of people there.

The committee had the privilege of visiting Changi Prison and observing the Singaporean justice system firsthand. When we talk about a progressive approach to justice and corrective services, I believe Singapore is a standout example. It would be fair to say that SCORE, which is the Singapore Corporation of Rehabilitative Enterprises, and the Captains of Lives program in Singapore impressed all of us while we were there. However, what equally impressed me about the Singaporean model was that their systems are in balance. On the one hand, there were the incredibly progressive and compassionate rehabilitation, education and work programs, which we have talked about so much here; on the other hand, that was balanced out with an incredibly strict imprisonment regime. I am not necessarily saying that that should be the path for Western Australia, but it should be noted that the two systems in Singapore work because they are in balance. There is one on either side. I point out that although Singaporean prisons are harsh—that may be too good a term—they are also incredibly safe and calm. However, what I am saying is that I do not think we can swing past, have a look at another country's systems, cherry pick the bits that we like from that and just bolt them on to what we are already doing. I believe it needs to be looked at as a whole system. I believe the Singaporean system works because of its holistic operations.

There is definitely scope to expand our programs and to be more progressive—even compassionate in some cases—and choosey about the education, rehabilitation and work programs that we are offering in our prisons. However, my observation was that this works in Singapore only because it is balanced against the fact that there are real consequences for those people who are sent to prison; it is a real punishment for the inmates. In the first instance, when a person goes into a Singaporean prison, it is abruptly clear that their past behaviour is considered unacceptable and that being in prison is a punishment for and a consequence of their crimes. A prison in Singapore is certainly a place that is unpleasant enough that people would not want to end up there again in a hurry. A prisoner will accept this in deciding that he wants to turn his life around. We saw that the prisoners there were very motivated and very disciplined in what they were doing. They really had a desire and almost a hunger to turn their lives around. That was evident across all the education programs and all the work programs that we saw in the Singaporean prison system. While the member for Mindarie is in the chamber, I should mention one program in Singapore, which is a tattoo removal program. The member for Mindarie commented on this in the newspaper a few weeks ago. It is one small thing that is done in Singapore, but I believe it makes quite a big difference. I have with me an advertisement for that. On this document it says, "Help remove the label of prejudice". Literally, the prisoner's past is erased, and he is helped to make a clean and fresh start.

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

Mr A.P. JACOB: I am not a tattooist. That is not where I am wishing to head with this at all. However, visible prison and gang tatts would certainly be an impediment to advancement in many career paths. That is just one program that is being run in the Singaporean prison system.

As I said at the beginning of my comments, this is an interim report, and the committee will be doing further work on this inquiry in the second half of this year. Certainly, visiting some sites has been an eye-opening

experience. Being able to see both the Millstream and the Decca station programs within a day of each other and compare them painted a very different picture from what we read and hear about. In the next six months, I do not think there is likely to be any substantive change in the direction we are taking or the recommendations we are making. As I said at the start, this is an area that could have huge benefits for inmates, for the state government and for the community at large. The opportunities that we have identified in this report are many and varied, but they centre around making the absolute most of where we have those prisoners and seeing it as an opportunity to engage with them.

One area we have not touched on that I hope we will be able to look into further is that in Singapore the prisoners were very self-motivated when going into the programs—or that was my interpretation of the Singaporean justice system.

I pass on my thanks to our committee research officers—the principal research officer, Dr Brian Gordon, and Jovita Hogan. I thank them for their continuing hard work for the committee. I also thank my fellow members for the often robust discussions that we had, but I think we have come up with a very good report.

MR A.P. O'GORMAN (Joondalup) [11.56 am]: I also commend the report to the house. As is usual when we conduct inquiries into various issues, we learn a great deal about a subject that previously we probably had very little knowledge of. In the course of this inquiry I have learned an enormous amount, not just about our prison system, but also about the people within our prison system. My observation since commencing the inquiry is that many of the inmates in our prison system have very poor literacy and numeracy levels, and that fact alone has contributed to them winding up in our corrective services system. They are punished because they cannot do simple things such as get a licence or understand the methodology of paying fines. That runs up big bills for them, and eventually they wind up in our prison system. I think that a great failing of our society is that we take this sort of attitude to a group of people who, for one reason or another, are in this position—sometimes through their own fault and sometimes through no fault of their own but through a fault of the education system in which there are cracks that these people fall through. That is something that we must look at in much more depth across government to see how we can assist people before they hit the prison system. The intent of this report is to work with those people once they are in the prison system so that we can make sure that when they come out, after serving a term of imprisonment, they do not get caught up in the revolving-door syndrome whereby they are sent back to prison again for similar-type offences.

The intent of the recommendations in this report is to seek to build the industry part of our prisons to make sure that there is ample opportunity for inmates to be able to learn something about work, to learn something about how they can engage in work, and to give them the basics of an education to a level at which they can go out and apply for a job. On many occasions nowadays people have to apply for jobs on the internet or in a written format. If a person does not have the basics in literacy and numeracy, that person is excluded straightaway. Therefore, it is very important that we bring into our prison system, as the chair of the committee has already said, contemporary industries, whereby we teach our inmates quite a lot about computers, how to handle Word documents and processing documents, and how to put their curricula vitae together so that they can apply for positions in the first place. Once they do that, it is about not only being able to apply but also being work ready. Throughout our travels we saw excellent programs, particularly at Changi Prison in Singapore. We should not overlook Roebourne Regional Prison. When we visited that prison committee members were stunned by the level of dedication of the staff and the willingness of inmates to engage in education and training so that they can move into an employment position when they are released from prison. There are employers in that area who will take them on. We have heard great stories about people who have been involved in the corrective services system since they were 16 or 17 years of age and who now hold positions of leadership in the community that involve them being role models and training other people so that they can enter the workforce. That is uplifting.

Another great shame of our society is the large number of Indigenous people in our prisons. They experience great distress because they are moved from their homeland. We visited Casuarina Prison and the Indigenous population is such that one cell block is devoted to Indigenous prisoners. That is quite distressing. The men in that cell block are aggrieved because they are so far from home. They have great difficulty speaking with family members. They are allowed to make minimal phone calls; phone calls that come at a great cost. There is seldom, if ever, one-on-one or face-to-face contact with family members or people from their homeland. That is quite problematic for those people, as it would be for anyone who is so far removed from their family that they do not have support. Singapore is trying very hard to combat that issue. Part of its rehabilitation program involves keeping prisoners connected with family members. Prisoners are allowed two visits a month; one visit is an electronic visit and the other is a face-to-face visit. If I remember correctly, the face-to-face visit is a 10-minute visit and the electronic visit is a 20-minute visit. That is enough to keep them connected with family; previously, they did not always have that opportunity.

What also stunned us during our visit to Changi Prison was the commitment of the system to providing training. Changi has a fully operational bakery that supplies Singapore with the bulk of its bread. After the bread is made at Changi Prison, it is sent to different bakeries where it is re-branded and sold as different types of bread. The majority of Singapore's bread is baked at Changi Prison. The bakery was a military-style operation. It clicked along from the time the bread was made to the loading of the bread onto the trucks so that it could be delivered to the various bakeries. It is a great system. I certainly hope that the government considers our recommendation to establish an authority that specifically tries to bring industry into prisons for the purpose of training inmates so that they have an opportunity to participate properly in society once they leave prison.

The members for Ocean Reef and Armadale have already mentioned Decca station outside Roebourne. We were amazed by the inmates' energy and the pride they felt for what they were doing. They are turning a desolate camp into a liveable area, in which they can sit comfortably and learn new skills, such as computing, planning and welding skills. They asked us to recommend that they be allowed to stay at the station overnight so that they do not have to waste the hour or hour and a half travel time to and from the prison each day. If they were allowed to stay overnight they could progress their training much more quickly. It was certainly an eye opener for me that the inmates were so keen to progress their training.

I take this opportunity to thank the committee staff, particularly Dr Brian Gordon and Jovita Hogan, who helped us through and found ways to reword issues that are contentious. The committee tried very hard to ensure that the report did not have a minority report. At times that was very difficult because of the opposing political opinions. The committee staff managed to find ways through for us. I commend the chair of the committee for managing to minimise the differences across the political divide. I also thank the other members of the committee—the member for Pilbara, the member for Ocean Reef and the member for Armadale, who is now leaving us. I wish her well in the future. Unfortunately, the member for Morley has not had as much to do with this report as he would have liked because of an illness. However, he has kept up with the issues and has read the report at home. He has a deep interest in the issue. It is a shame that he cannot be here today to give his speech, because he was also very supportive.

MR T.G. STEPHENS (Pilbara) [12.07 pm]: I hate prisons! I find them an expression of the failure of our community to keep people on pathways towards productive engagement in their lives and in the lives of their communities. I have spent time in prison as a prisoner. I loathed the powerless and futility of that experience. I loathe the fact that many constituents are wasting their time in prisons and I loathe the futility of prisoners who are on the prison treadmill because they return to prison over and over again. It is a waste of lives and a waste of money. It is a disaster for all of us.

This is a bipartisan report. It has been published in the political context of the complete crisis faced by the Western Australian prison system. Our prisons are absolutely overcrowded; a disaster is unfolding before us. How odd it is as parliamentarians to have the kind of rich experience that was referred to by my colleagues. I refer to the visit to Changi Prison, which was amazingly educative, as was illustrated by the comments made today in Parliament. We were appropriately lectured by prison officers from Changi who told us that we are inhumane because of our failure to adequately invest in programs that put people on alternative pathways.

Mr A.P. Jacob: What did they say when you asked them about double bunking?

Mr T.G. STEPHENS: They criticised double bunking.

Mr A.P. Jacob: Because they would have three or more.

Mr T.G. STEPHENS: Indeed. The prisons are organised and designed for that and are not overloaded. That is not the point. They were of the view that our failure to invest in adequate pathways out of the prison system is inhumane. It was a pretty amazing experience to be in Changi Prison, of all places, because of what that means to an Australian. When I arrived in Parliament, a former prisoner of war was a member in the other place. I refer to Graham MacKinnon, who was in Changi Prison during the war. I had an awful image of Changi. Now it is a modern prison investing in the Captains of Lives program, through which vast numbers of psychologists are arriving in the prison system. The captains of industry are investing in the prison system to put people on an alternative pathway from the recidivism that is the shared experience of prisons around the world. Singapore's recidivism rate is now down to 25 per cent. That is an extraordinary statistic, of which it is proud. These are alternatives that are now highlighted in the recommendations of this report—investing in prisons and making them places of education and training and creating pathways to employment, which is in the best interests of prisoners, their families and the communities of which they can once more be a part. It does however require some courage, and this report invites the government to find those pathways.

I notice that we will soon be debating a bill that deals with another state agreement. It reminds me that I represent the Pilbara, and so many people from Pilbara communities end up in our prison system who are not yet being adequately provided with educational pathways that could guarantee them links to training and

employment. The chairman of our committee, the member for Armadale, made the point to people from industry interested in expanding the railway systems of the Pilbara that there could be opportunities afforded by prisons—including the one in the Pilbara—if the government could just find a way of linking prisons to the challenges of industry. We could find ways for prisoners in Roebourne, for instance, to get involved in the resources sector. We could take the embryonic program in Roebourne, to which Rio Tinto makes a very small contribution as part of a very successful partnership with the prison, and expand it so that the challenges of building railway lines, infrastructure and mine sites will be linked to prisoners through pathways around education, training and employment tasks that are connected to the challenges of our resources sector. There could be no better contribution than a state agreement that linked industry formally and firmly with the challenge of turning around prison populations. Prisons produce disastrous social outcomes for prisoners, their families and the communities of which they were once a part. The worst part about life in many of our regional towns and communities is the dysfunctional behaviours of people who have been caught up in alcohol and drug abuse. There are unfortunately other dysfunctions in the prison system, including mental illness and drug use, that too frequently are simply not treated in the prison system.

Prisons could become centres of excellence for the delivery of pathways that link prisoners to industry. Industry is desperate for anyone with a pulse to take up jobs in the Pilbara, where it is very hard to find employees to fill the positions that are on offer. We have resource opportunities galore, yet people are sitting in prisons, unconnected to that opportunity. The member for Armadale has introduced people to that possibility. I want to take this opportunity to say that the report speaks for itself and I commend it to members of the house. I have drawn to the attention of the Minister for Corrective Services the complaint on page 54 about the inadequate availability of reform programs for our expanding number of prisoners. There is a budget bid in that if ever there was one to increase the resources being made available to the system and to better utilise them for education and training opportunities and programs. Partnerships with industry will do that more securely than most.

My time comes quickly to an end, but I want to take this opportunity to say to the member for Armadale what an extraordinary privilege it has been to have shared the journey of this inquiry and report with her, and also to have been part of her parliamentary life in this Parliament since she has been here. She is an exceptional person and parliamentarian by any standards. I have been here a long time—nearly 28 years—and it has been an extraordinary experience to have worked alongside a colleague like her in Parliament, the cabinet room and in the committee process. This is an exceptional person by any standards, and we lose a great champion of the Western Australian community from our Parliament. Hopefully new opportunities will open up for her as a result of the new pathway she has set for herself in federal Parliament. In her absence, I will be singing her praises. I will miss her as a friend and we will all miss her extraordinary contribution to this place, part of which is on display in this report. I thank her for the work she has done on this report and the work she has done for the people of Armadale and the people of Western Australia. I will never forget the contributions she has made, particularly the privilege of being with her in a cabinet room when she championed some of the great Western Australian public transport infrastructure projects that would never have been possible had it not been for the fact that she went in and did it.

I thank the rest of my colleagues on the committee for the opportunity to work with them. I know it has been robust and that there have been issues over which we have been at odds, but fortunately there are more things in this report that have united us than have divided us. We have a report that we can present to the Parliament with confidence and with the wonderful support of the parliamentary staff available to us. This will become the first plank of some solid work to be done in future.