

BANKSIA HILL DETENTION CENTRE — PREMIER'S MEETING

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

I refer to reports that the Premier's scheduled youth detention crisis meeting will go for less than 90 minutes, despite him repeatedly referring to this matter as difficult, not easy and complex. Does the Premier believe that 90 minutes is adequate to discuss reform of a system that has been described as a recipe for making kids worse and how to make a monster?

**Mr M. McGOWAN replied:**

The meeting is tomorrow, and I thank the participants for coming along. It is scheduled for 90 minutes, but as I have made plain, if it needs to go longer, it will go longer; it all depends on the contributions of the people involved. I am interested in the positive, constructive, practical and achievable ideas that people might have to improve the youth justice system.

I have a few points to make on the youth justice system. The average incarceration over the last 10 years, or the number of people in detention, has halved. That is a very significant thing that goes without any public acknowledgement by the people who comment on these things. In 2010 or 2012 there were roughly double the number of people in detention. Secondly, in order to be detained when people are under the age of 18, they ordinarily have to have committed a great many offences or an extremely serious offence. I have had involvement with young people going into detention before, and ordinarily it is at the expiry of 20, 30 or 40 offences before they end up there—normally multiple break-ins or assaults and things of that nature. It is very unfortunate, but at some point in time every other diversion or measure put in place by the courts that are designed to rehabilitate and provide alternative options for young people are used, and if they do not work, eventually detention is the option of final resort. Banksia Hill has a large number of programs in place—music programs, recreational programs, educational programs, group programs, welfare programs, psychological programs and access to psychiatrists. Banksia Hill has all those services available to the detainees.

Today the Minister for Regional Development is in the Kimberley, announcing the site of the Kimberley youth justice diversionary facility. We announced—I think it was in the state budget—\$15 million towards a Kimberley diversionary facility. We worked cooperatively with the Kimberley Land Council and local Aboriginal groups to come up with a site for the Kimberley diversionary facility. For juvenile offenders who are from the Kimberley, the Pilbara, the goldfields or the midwest, there is now an alternative option available to the courts to send them to so that they do not go to Banksia Hill.

However, there is one thing we do not want to do. The advice I received from Wayne Martin, the former chief justice, was that if we build too many youth detention facilities around the state, we will just fill them. Wayne Martin was adamant: "Don't build any more; you'll just fill them." So we have come up with an innovative concept on a pastoral station where young people will be able to gain access to guidance and counselling from Aboriginal elders in particular, but also some of the activities that one engages in on a pastoral station—basically pastoral activities, such as riding horses, rounding up cattle and whatever else it might be on that pastoral station. The site of that is being announced today.

These are important initiatives that have not been done before. Last time something of this nature was done—I would not say I liked it—was when the then Liberal government in the 1990s announced a boot camp out near Kalgoorlie. Do members remember the boot camp announced by the then Liberal–National government? This is a very different concept from that.