

PRISONS, DETECTION OF DRUGS AND CONTRABAND

643. Ms M.M. QUIRK to the Minister for Justice:

What steps is the government taking to improve the detection of drugs and contraband in our prisons?

Mr J.B. D'ORAZIO replied:

I thank the member for Girrawheen for the question. It gives me great pleasure to talk about this subject, which I know the member has a keen interest in. Members will recall that the government is building fences around Karnet and Wooroloo Prison Farms.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, members!

Mr J.B. D'ORAZIO: I had to say that, because I knew that the member for Hillarys would not be able to hold his tongue and would make a comment about how big the fence is. I note the member's suggestion that I am building only half a fence around these prisons. A quote from the member states that I was cute with my media announcement telling the public that I was building fences around the prisons' accommodation facilities, and that that would keep the inmates in prison some of the time. The member's media release went on to ask what would happen when they played football, worked in the garden or did some other leisure activity, because they would still be capable of walking to freedom under those circumstances. The member for Hillarys obviously does not do his research very well. The fences around these facilities include the ovals. They will keep prisoners in prison when they have their leisure activities.

Mr R.F. Johnson: What about the other open areas?

Mr J.B. D'ORAZIO: The suggestion of the member for Hillarys is that the new Liberal Party policy is that it will fence Wooroloo and Karnet Prison Farms. That means that the fence around Wooroloo prison will be a 30-kilometre fence and will cost \$115 million. Is that the new policy of the Leader of the Opposition?

Several members interjected.

Mr J.B. D'ORAZIO: Is his policy to fence Wooroloo prison totally - that is, 30 kilometres of fence at a cost of \$115 million - or will he again contradict the opposition spokesman on justice for the fourth time in the past fortnight?

Mr M.J. Birney: Can you tell us whether the trustee company of which you are a director holds any shares or property?

Mr J.B. D'ORAZIO: I will answer that question any time the Leader of the Opposition likes.

Mr M.J. Birney: Can you answer it now?

Mr J.B. D'ORAZIO: It does not. It is a trustee for a family trust. Will the Leader of the Opposition answer this question -

The SPEAKER: Therein lies the problem of taking interjections.

Mr J.B. D'ORAZIO: Is it the Leader of the Opposition's policy to build a 30-kilometre fence around Wooroloo prison at a cost of \$115 million?

Mr M.J. Birney: Can I ask you to clarify what you have just said?

Mr J.B. D'ORAZIO: Will the Leader of the Opposition answer the question? Again, he does not want to answer the question.

Mr M.J. Birney: Do you hold any shares or property in that trustee company - yes or no?

Mr J.B. D'ORAZIO: Let me tell the Leader of the Opposition -

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition is persisting with an interjection that the minister does not wish to answer. I do not wish him to answer the interjection either, because it has nothing to do with the question. I call on the minister to answer the question.

Mr J.B. D'ORAZIO: Thank you, Mr Speaker. The opposition spokesman for justice has got it wrong for about the fifth time in the past month. He has gone from flogging them, castrating them, hanging them -

Mr R.F. Johnson: That is just you lot!

Mr J.B. D'ORAZIO: - to the classic proposal of building fences around these prisons that are supposed to be for the purpose of keeping prisoners in jail. Does the member for Hillarys realise that the response time will be

30 minutes if the fence is 30 kilometres long? The prisoners will be long gone. The government has done the practical thing of including the ovals in the area to be fenced. The fences will help to stop contraband -

Mr R.F. Johnson: How high are the fences?

Mr J.B. D'ORAZIO: They are 3.2 metres high.

Mr R.F. Johnson: Are they actually fixed in the ground or are they on concrete slabs?

Mr J.B. D'ORAZIO: No; they are floating in the air!

Mr R.F. Johnson: Are they sunk in the ground at the moment, and not on concrete slabs?

Mr J.B. D'ORAZIO: I think the member for Hillarys has blown it enough over the past few days.

Mr M.J. Birney: You had better be careful or we will ask you to resign as well.

Mr J.B. D'ORAZIO: I thank the Leader of the Opposition.

This is a very interesting issue. When the member for Hillarys makes public comments, he should think about what he is saying, because it has an enormous impact on what happens in the community.

The government is absolutely committed to restricting drugs and contraband in prisons. The fences at Wooroloo and Karnet prisons will help. In addition, during the parliamentary recess I attended the graduation of the teams from the drug dogs program. They are a great addition to our armoury to restrict the amount of drugs and contraband going into prisons. Five teams graduated. They will be allocated to prisons in Albany, Greenough and Bunbury and to Hakea and Wooroloo prisons. They will be permanently located at those prisons. The team at Hakea Prison will be a swinging team of dogs that will be used at different prisons.

Mr R.F. Johnson interjected.

Mr J.B. D'ORAZIO: This is important, member for Hillarys. Operational staff will be located at each prison. I will give members some idea of how effective these drug teams are. In the 12 months to 31 August - this is prior to the graduation of the five new teams - the canine section conducted 1 312 prison operations and searched 52 576 visitors and 4 734 prisoners. Their seizures included 132 drug-related items, such as bongs, syringes and cones; 133 quantities of cannabis; 79 quantities of illegal tablets; 29 quantities of white powders, including amphetamines and heroin; nine swallowed unidentified substances; and nine various unlawful items, including weapons, tattoo equipment and alcohol. They have also assisted the police in a major operation that netted drugs with an estimated street value of more than \$75 000, \$25 000 in cash, a firearm and 100 rounds of ammunition.

Mr R.F. Johnson: This has all happened since you've been the minister? Well done.

Mr J.B. D'ORAZIO: No. The member for Hillarys never listens. This has happened in the 12 months to 31 August. I will tell members just how effective these teams are. One first-class prison officer, Trevor Sellers, and his dog Buzz were deployed at Greenough Regional Prison. When I went to the prison, Buzz took a special liking to me. I got a bit worried because the dog kept flapping his legs at me. He was very friendly towards me and gave me a nice licking and a cuddle.

Several members interjected.

Mr J.B. D'ORAZIO: I am sure that the member for Hillarys would have liked to know that. Interestingly, the first two busts that Buzz made were in the first three days.

Mr M.J. Birney interjected.

Mr J.B. D'ORAZIO: That is a great result by all accounts. The word quickly spread in the prisons that the dogs were there and that people should not bring anything into the prisons. That shows how successful these teams will be. It is important that we continue to use these teams, because they will help prevent drugs going into prisons. I make no apology for the fact that I will try to ensure that every possible measure is taken to minimise contraband and drugs going into prisons. Will I be able to solve all the problems? No, I will not. However, over the next period members will see that we are making a concerted effort to minimise the amount of drugs going into the prison system. More importantly, we will escalate the search for drugs in the prison system, because it is in the interests of all of us to ensure that -

Mr R.F. Johnson: I will certainly do what I can to help you.

Mr J.B. D'ORAZIO: This is the great pet detective, "Ace" Johnson. If he is not careful, I might get Buzz to give him a hand as well. He may find out about that dead cat theory of his before he has to refer it to the corruption commission. Once again, this is a very important initiative and I am sure even the pet detective, "Ace" Johnson, will support what we are trying to do.