

FINE DEFAULTERS IN PRISON

**280. Mrs J. HUGHES to the Minister for Justice:**

I refer the minister to the problem of fine defaulters in prison. Will the minister advise what strategies will be used to address this problem?

**Mr J.B. D'ORAZIO replied:**

I thank the member for her interest in this matter. I made a statement about this matter today, but obviously a number of issues must be teased out. As clearly identified by the opposition spokesperson, the member for Hillarys, the issue of fine defaulters is an important one. His understanding is that fine defaulters should not be in prison. I agree with that. It is ludicrous to have people in jail for fine defaulting.

**The SPEAKER:** I ask the minister to take his seat. I call the member for Vasse to order for the second time.

**Mr J.B. D'ORAZIO:** Although it costs \$250 a day to keep fine defaulters in prison, they work their fines off at \$150 a day. That is not something we should be encouraging. Interestingly enough, the opposition issued a press release on 9 June that stated -

Fine defaulters are clogging up WA jails . . .

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** Particularly maximum-security ones.

**Mr J.B. D'ORAZIO:** The member for Hillarys' press release also reads -

You would think that the Government would make these changes a priority to save taxpayers' dollars and reduce the pressure on our growing prison population.

This morning on radio he said -

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** You've been listening to me.

**Mr J.B. D'ORAZIO:** I always listen to the member for Hillarys. This morning on radio the member for Hillarys said that even though fine defaulters should not be in maximum-security prisons, they should not be let out but be transferred to minimum-security prisons.

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** Is that what I said?

**Mr J.B. D'ORAZIO:** Does the member want me to quote it word for word? The member for Hillarys stated -

We should not let fine defaulters out but rather we just shouldn't keep them at maximum security.

Does the member for Hillarys want me to look after this group of people using some commonsense? This is an opportunity for the member for Hillarys to support the government, because this is an important issue.

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** If they do the crime, they should do the time.

**Mr J.B. D'ORAZIO:** I am more than happy for criminals to do their time. We are talking about fine defaulters who owe a debt to society and who should repay that debt to society. Putting fine defaulters in jail and having them cost society an extra \$100 a day over and above what it costs to keep them in jail - fine defaulters work their fines off at \$150 a day, but it costs us \$250 a day to keep them in prison - is not a socially sensible solution. It is not good for fine defaulters and it is not good for the community. Once again, I ask the member for Hillarys to come on board and support what the government is trying to do. It is a good social program. The member should not try to point score on this issue, because it is too important to the community.