

COURT SECURITY AND CUSTODIAL SERVICES CONTRACT

Statement by Minister for Justice

MR J.B. D'ORAZIO (Ballajura - Minister for Justice) [2.28 pm]: I advise the house of the extension of the court security and custodial services contract for the next three years. This contract will be carried out by the AIMS Corporation. This decision has been made only following significant improvements in the areas identified by the Richard Hooker inquiry into the Supreme Court escape. Upgraded facilities and major improvements in prisoner management will lead to stronger security in courts across Western Australia.

AIMS has recruited a new general manager with international security experience, whose improvement program saw the retraining of AIMS staff, improved key control, the recruitment of 80 new officers, the implementation of an intelligence and security function and the establishment of a specialist group to manage identified high-risk situations. This last year has resulted in the contractor meeting the majority of performance measures. The custody centre at the Supreme Court has been completely refitted as part of a major upgrade to this court. It includes improvements to both physical and electronic security of the custody control centre. Cells have been modernised, and closed circuit TV has been introduced. New, improved locks have been fitted and the sally port/transfer area has been upgraded to a more functional and modern standard. Funds are also being put into capital works programs to improve service delivery across the state. Minor works have been completed, resulting in improvements to the secure line of court custody centres.

In terms of the Department of Justice, improved contract management procedures will ensure that any problems are identified and corrected early. This includes improved intelligence and security with the establishment of the court security directorate. A number of joint operations during high-risk trials have been undertaken with the Western Australia Police Force. Videoconferencing will further reduce the risks by allowing prisoners to remain in prison. Videoconferencing technology has been upgraded at courts in the central business district and at Hakea and Casuarina Prisons, and is now operating from Acacia Prison.

The contract will terminate in 2008 and the CBD court services will transition to the CBD courts project, which has been awarded to the Western Liberty Group. A study will be undertaken during 2006 to determine the future of services outside CBD courts.

There has been a marked improvement in the level of service delivery provided under the contract. The likelihood of escapes has been greatly reduced, with all concerns raised by the Hooker inquiry being addressed. The Inspector of Custodial Services has agreed to review the performance of the AIMS Corporation in 18 months to ensure that it continues to perform at its highest standard. I table the contract extension.

[See paper 727.]