

CORRECTIVE SERVICES — PRISONS

865. Ms J. FARRER to the Minister for Corrective Services:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment to keeping Western Australia safe and strong by addressing the pressures placed on our prison system due to the eight and a half years of mismanagement by the previous Liberal-National government. Can the minister outline to the house how this government's efforts have not only improved community safety, but also supported local Western Australian businesses and created more local jobs as the economy recovers from the impacts of COVID-19?

Mr F.M. LOGAN replied:

I thank the member for Kimberley for the question, and I congratulate her for spending her time in this house fighting for the people of the Kimberley in trying to address some of the injustices that have occurred in that part of our state.

I have said this in the house a few times before: after three years and nine months as the Minister for Corrective Services, what I inherited from the previous government in the area of corrections was a dysfunctional department and a dysfunctional prison estate that had no plan, no money, no spare beds, and security that was left to deteriorate. Having given a commitment to this house to fix those things, over the last three years and nine months I have gone ahead and fixed them on behalf of the people of WA and on behalf of the prisoners to keep our state safe and strong.

In the area that the member for Kimberley comes from, members will remember that in this house I referred to the absolutely disgraceful state in which Broome Regional Prison was left after the time of the previous government. It did not know whether to keep it open or close it. It kept moving from one position to another, spending no money on Broome Regional Prison. If members look at the coroner's inquiry into Mr Jackamarra's death in Broome prison, it points directly to the fact that the hanging points were not taken out of the prison because the government did not know whether or not to keep it open. It was a disgrace that Mr Jackamarra ended up losing his life because of a failure to remove those hanging points from the ablutions in Broome prison. We fixed it. As soon as I became the Minister for Corrective Services, I immediately moved on Broome prison and allocated \$2.7 million to upgrade the security facilities and reception area, remove the hanging points and fix up the women's cells. Those works created 160 jobs and 39 apprenticeships, all of which was local content because the work was done by companies in Broome.

We are now moving on to replace Broome prison because, at the end of the day, it is more than 100 years old and it needs to be replaced. We are in the process of planning a new Broome Regional Prison. In fact, the member for Kimberley joined me recently in a meeting with traditional owners to identify the right location for a new Broome prison. We have allocated \$1.4 million in this year's budget to do the planning and design work and to start doing the contractual work for the replacement of Broome prison. I hope we can make some announcements in the near future about the location and design of the new Broome Regional Prison.

Those are two examples of massive changes that have occurred within the Department of Corrective Services in Western Australia; so much so that for the first time in more than a decade, the prison estate is at only 82 per cent capacity. When I took responsibility for this portfolio, there were more prisoners than beds. We now have more than 8 500 beds in the Western Australian prison estate, and we are running at 82 per cent capacity. That means that we can cope with any surge that may happen as a result of the great work that has been done by the Minister for Police in having more police on the beat. For any surge that may result in extra people either on remand or sentenced to prison, we have the beds to put them in. That was not the case in March 2017. The people who work in corrections are in a much better space. Their heads are in a much better space and they enjoy going to work. As I said, that means that we have created a stronger and safer state.