

MAHONEY RECOMMENDATIONS

184. Mr A.P. O’GORMAN to the Minister for Justice:

Will the minister update the house on what action the government has taken to implement the recommendations made by Justice Mahoney in his report “Inquiry into the Management of Offenders in Custody and the Community”?

Mr J.B. D’ORAZIO replied:

I thank the member for the question. Members know that last week I announced the expenditure of \$100 million over four years for the next phase of restoring the balance in the corrections system. That is a 10-year commitment by the government to the corrections system in this state. The Mahoney inquiry was held, and at the end of the process it made an enormous number of recommendations. The government will implement those recommendations. As I said, we have now committed \$100 million over four years. This is just one part of the process. We have already split the Department of Justice into the Department of Corrective Services and the Department of the Attorney General. We also have introduced into Parliament the Prisons and Sentencing Legislation Amendment Bill, which is the first step to the Corrections Bill, which will be introduced later this year and which will address a number of issues that the Mahoney inquiry indicated needed to be addressed. We also have made a number of other changes. The \$100 million will go towards restoring the balance, which is a priority initiative of the government to make sure that community safety is made a higher priority and that the number of prisoners who re-offend is reduced. The government will make sure that the people who work in the corrections system work in a safe environment. We want to make sure also that we provide the resources required by the people who work in the corrections system and the groups who support the corrections system, in an endeavour to reach the desired outcomes of the community and the government.

The allocation of \$100 million will result in \$17.5 million to cover the employment of 32 additional community corrections officers, which is a 24 per cent increase on the current number; 17 new juvenile justice officers, which is a 33 per cent increase; a \$19 million boost for prison staffing numbers, including 70 new positions; and an additional \$20 million for training across the correction system. We will also be funding other prison and community-based services. They will get a much more effective system through this process, including the establishment of a set of professional standards to provide clear guidelines for offender management across the service, better integration of custodial and community-based offender management, intelligent gathering of performance measuring, new measures to classify prisoners so that prisoners are placed appropriately, and increasing prisoner participation in work and training. It is important that prisoners have the opportunity to be trained while they are in prison, have better educational programs and work to gain some skills so they can be rehabilitated into the community when they leave prison. That is in everybody’s interest. It is absolutely important that we support prisons with more capital grants. I will be announcing some of these grants later in relation to restoring the balance.

I hope that the opposition is absolutely committed to this cause by saying, “Well done, government; you said you were going to do it and now you’re delivering.” I look forward to the opposition saying, “You’re doing a good job.” Since the government appointed Ian Johnson as the Acting Commissioner, there has been a marked improvement in the justice system. I thank him for his work and that of the other people involved, including the West Australian Prison Officers Union and the CSA, which have worked closely with us to try to achieve the changes that are needed. By all of us working in partnership, we can get the outcome that the community wants - better community safety, better results for the people who work in the system and, most importantly, prisoners being helped to rehabilitate and not reoffend.