

AUDITOR GENERAL, COMMUNITY-BASED SENTENCES

216. Mr P.W. ANDREWS to the Minister for Justice:

I refer the minister to today's update by the Auditor General to his 2001 report on the implementation and management of community-based sentences. Will the minister advise the house of the findings of the Auditor General's report?

Mr J.B. D'ORAZIO replied:

I thank the member for the question. Obviously the opposition did not intend to ask it. This report on community-based sentencing is a follow-up performance examination of that undertaken in May 2001. The follow-up report clearly differentiates between the previous government's record outlined in the 2001 report and that of the current government.

Mr M.J. Birney: The recommendations are the same; nothing has changed.

Mr J.B. D'ORAZIO: This is the report of 2001, which clearly rates an F for failure.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call to order the member for Nedlands and the Leader of the Opposition.

Ms S.E. Walker interjected.

The SPEAKER: I call to order the member for Nedlands for the second time.

Mr J.B. D'ORAZIO: I will try to answer the question for the third time. As I was saying, this is the 2001 report, which contains an assessment of the coalition government's performance, and this is the current report, which examines the performance of this government. The 2001 performance rates an F and this government's performance rates an A. If the two are put together, that describes what the coalition government did in eight years!

Several members: Sweet FA.

Mr J.B. D'ORAZIO: Yes. I will also indicate what was said in 2001, because this needs to be put on the record.

Mr R.F. Johnson: Which of your script writers gave you that to say?

Mr J.B. D'ORAZIO: It did not require much attention. The Auditor General described the problem areas in his 2001 report as follows: inadequate staffing and supervision, poor case management of offenders, breach action not taken in a timely manner - sometimes not at all. The offenders program was not properly resourced and community work was not properly supervised or undertaken. Those comments reflect the shambles the government inherited.

I am pleased to say that over the past four years, as indicated today, enormous improvements have been made. The Department of Justice has employed 55 new permanent community corrections staff, given an effective pay rise of \$6 000 a year to base-grade community corrections officers, appointed a senior casework supervisor at the community corrections branch, spent \$2 million on a new world's best practice program, required all staff to undertake national standard certification to ensure they are trained in best practice procedures, invested in a new professional practice and standards unit, established a dedicated community work supervision unit, invested in a centralised breach unit, and invested in a new risk-assessment model for the management of offenders.

Today's report clearly recognises that this government's priority is community safety. I want to make sure that everyone understands that this government is committed to community safety. As indicated today, the Department of Justice has improved case management, increased staffing levels, improved community work supervision and projects, is providing more effective delivery of the offenders' program and is providing improved and more timely breaching practice. Do members opposite understand what that means? The report on this government's performance during the past four years is fantastic. I thank the previous two justice ministers - the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and the Attorney General - for doing a fantastic job. This is a very difficult area, and I give credit where it is due. It is very important to recognise my predecessors' contributions.

The Broome report by Professor Harding encapsulates the coalition's performance when it was in government. It refers to the plane taking off from the airport and the amnesia cloud setting in before the drinks trolley comes down the aisle! That is what happened to the opposition when it came to managing the justice portfolio.

Mr R.F. Johnson: You are not misleading Parliament I hope.

Mr J.B. D'ORAZIO: The report refers to the period of -

Mr R.F. Johnson interjected.

Mr J.B. D’ORAZIO: Did the member for Hillarys read the report?

Mr R.F. Johnson: No.

Mr J.B. D’ORAZIO: It refers to the amnesia cloud. The member knows what I am talking about. Opposition members would love to forget about it, but I will keep reminding them.

This report is fantastic. However, considerable improvement is still needed and the government will dedicate the resources required. However, one thing on which the government will not compromise is community safety. Members on this side of the house are committed to providing a system that guarantees community safety. Resources will be allocated to resolve the remaining problems and we will make sure that what happened in the 1980s under the coalition regime will not happen during this regime.

Mr R.F. Johnson: The 1980s was during your government’s time.

Mr J.B. D’ORAZIO: I meant the 1990s.