

BANKSIA HILL DETENTION CENTRE — *FOUR CORNERS* REPORT

680. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Premier:

I refer to the *Four Corners* exposé, “Locking Up Kids: Australia’s failure to protect children in detention”, which aired last night. Why has it taken the Premier and his government so long to concede that there is a problem with youth justice in Western Australia when experts like retired Western Australian judge Denis Reynolds; former Inspector of Custodial Services Neil Morgan; President of the Children’s Court, Hylton Quail; former police commissioners and the Telethon Kids Institute, have been raising these concerns for some months, and in some cases for years, only to be ignored?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

I watched the program last night. Obviously, we have had a look at some of the measures that staff sometimes use to restrain people and we have requested that they be changed and that alternative measures, when required, are used. That is one of the things we learnt from last night’s episode of *Four Corners*. Having said that, obviously we have a system at Banksia Hill Detention Centre that provides educational, welfare, psychological, psychiatric, recreational and musical services to the detainees there. With regard to the detainees who were moved to unit 18, they were moved there because of behavioural issues—in particular, assaulting staff. Some of them have assaulted staff on literally scores of occasions and have ruined their cells, so we had to move them elsewhere. That is not unprecedented; the last government did exactly the same thing. When the Leader of the Opposition was a minister, her government did exactly the same thing.

That is the reality of what we are dealing with. The youth custodial officers at Banksia Hill have to do a difficult job. They are trained to deal with people in crisis and a range of other things, and I would like to thank them and the other staff at Banksia Hill for the work that they do. That workforce has to deal with difficult situations. We are spending \$25 million on upgrading Banksia Hill, including an Aboriginal services unit, which is a \$3 million to \$4 million commitment that we announced in the last budget. On top of that, there will also be a rebuild of the crisis care unit and a strengthening of the intensive supervision units to make them less able to be damaged by detainees. All that work is ongoing.

This week or next week, at some point in time, I will meet with some of the individuals who have been public about these matters to hear whether they have any practical or achievable ways to improve the system—practical or achievable.

I heard some people on the program last night, including the journalist, say that detention should not be happening. A lot of the juveniles who are in detention are there because of serious sexual assaults, serious assaults on people, arson offences and armed robbery. Some people advocate that there should not be consequences for that; I do not agree with that.