

ALBANY REGIONAL PRISON — EXPANSION

477. Mr P. ABETZ to the Minister for Corrective Services:

I understand that the minister has received some communication from the *Albany Advertiser*, asking him to respond to criticism from the member for Albany about the expansion of the Albany Regional Prison, which is the first expansion of beds at that prison in almost a decade —

Dr A.D. Buti: What the hell does that have to do with your seat?

Mr P. ABETZ: I have prisoners in mine. I take a keen interest.

The SPEAKER: Member for Armadale, my instructions remain consistent; if you are going to interject on somebody asking a question, you will be formally called to order. Member for Armadale, I formally call you to order for the second time today.

Mr P. ABETZ: Could the minister please update the house on the progress of this project in Albany and the massive infrastructure investment by the Liberal–National government in the state’s prisons?

Mr M.J. COWPER replied:

I thank the member for Southern River. Unlike the Labor Party, the Liberal–National government is committed to law and order in this state and to ensuring that we invest in infrastructure needed to house the state’s prison population. Any criticism by the Labor government of the Liberal–National government is the height of hypocrisy.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: I make the observation that some members in this place are on three calls. It is early in question time and I presume that most of you want to stay around for the remainder of question time.

Mr M.J. COWPER: In the previous government’s term, there was an increase in the prison population that the government failed to accommodate. Labor failed to build any significant new prisons to ease the overcrowding in our state prisons. I am pleased to say in this place that the Liberal–National government has spent an unprecedented amount of money—\$655 million—on expanding the capacity of this state’s prisons to 2 661 beds right across the length and breadth of this state. How many did the previous government bring to this space? It brought a paltry 250. That is hardly even looking after the requirements of the people of Western Australia in the capacity of getting the criminals off the street. This government is serious about law and order and clearly the previous government was not. The government has committed \$655 million. The prison in Albany has been expanded through the addition of 128 beds.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Albany, I formally call you to order for the first time today. Member for Girrawheen, I formally call you to order for the first time today. Member for Cockburn, I know that we have talked about this. That is all I will say and you do not need to talk back to me at all.

Mr M.J. COWPER: From the \$655 million, money was spent down there at Albany. It is a fantastic prison. I was down there recently as a result of having read the report by the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services that said it was one of the best prisons in the state. When I was there we had the situation —

Mr P.B. Watson: You didn’t read the report. Here it is here. I will leave it to you to read afterwards.

Mr M.J. COWPER: I reckon the member for Albany must have fallen off his bike, Mr Speaker.

The SPEAKER: Member for Albany, there is a better way to approach this and you know there is. It is to get on your feet and ask a question. I formally call you to order for the second time today.

Mr M.J. COWPER: Clearly the member got lost on his postie bike one day and hit his head and all of a sudden discovered Albany Regional Prison. I doubt that he has even been there in recent times and seen the great work that has been done in that space. We have a brand-new facility at that location. This has raised the capacity of the prison. Members opposite are criticising the capacity of the prison at Albany. For the record, members, the total available beds at Albany is 485 beds. Currently, there are 296 people in the count, which is above the operational capacity of that building. All of a sudden, the member for Albany has had an epiphany: he has read a report and all of a sudden he knows all about it. This government has been absolutely committed to looking at expanding the capacity in the state.

The member has been critical about the closure of one of the units. One of the units —

Mr P.B. Watson interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Albany!

Mr M.J. COWPER: One of the units is going to be refurbished. We are using the labour of the prisoners onsite to do some minor works in looking after that. That is a great way of looking after the taxpayers' money, so we will have a situation in which prisoners will be involved in things such as undertaking minor repairs, painting, installing new cupboards, descaling and removing the build-up of calcium in the units. They are looking at patching tiles et cetera. This is a great initiative on behalf of the department to utilise its money in the best way possible.

Let us look at the other prison infrastructure that is underway. That allows me to enlighten members on the other side. The West Kimberley Regional Prison will open on 1 November. It is a fantastic new facility. It will boost capacity and be able to train —

Point of Order

Mr P. ABETZ: I am unable to hear the answer to the question.

The SPEAKER: Minister.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Mr M.J. COWPER: The West Kimberley Regional Prison, with 150 new beds, is being built near Derby and will be opened in November. The young adults facility is now called the Wandoo Reintegration Facility. Great credit must be given to the member for Bateman and the former Minister for Corrective Services in relation to that facility, which has been established at the Rangeview Remand Centre and will become operational in the next few months.

The Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison—for the information of the members for Kalgoorlie and Eyre—is a 350-bed brand-new prison that will be built in Kalgoorlie on a greenfields site. When the old prison closes, we will put it there. At Acacia Prison, 387 beds will be added to the existing prison. The construction of the new beds is expected to be completed by 2015. Also, 30 additional beds will be constructed at the Roebourne camp; prisoner accommodation units at Casuarina and Hakea Prisons are being refurbished; work camps are being established at Warburton, Wyndham and Dowerin; a mobile duress alarm system is being installed at Acacia; and the waste water treatment plants. There is a whole list of work that is being done in this space by this government. I find it extraordinarily hypocritical that these people come in here and start firing bullets over the fence when they obviously know nothing about the situation. As I stated previously, this is the most significant custodial accommodation program in the history of this state. It is something that we should all be very proud of.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Armadale, I formally call you to order for the first time today. Member for Collie—Preston, I call you to order for the first time today; I think the Member for Cockburn understands why that is the case. Member for Willagee, I formally call you to order for the first time today.