

BANKSIA HILL DETENTION CENTRE — *FOUR CORNERS* REPORT

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

I again refer to the damning story about Banksia Hill Detention Centre and youth justice in Western Australia that aired on ABC's *Four Corners* last night and the reports that up to September this year there have been 285 self-harm incidents and 20 attempted suicides by detainees. Will the government immediately instigate an independent inquiry into Western Australia's youth justice system and treatment of juveniles in detention; and, if not, why not?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

I will be convening a meeting with a range of stakeholders next week to hear any ideas they might have on practical and achievable measures we can put in place to improve the system. Obviously, within any juvenile or other detention facility we will have a range of incidents involving people who are incarcerated and who do not want to be incarcerated. That is natural. That is why we have a range of support and welfare services in place. Psychologists and psychiatrists visit Banksia Hill to provide that support. There are also a range of other welfare and counselling services. There are staff who are trained in working with young people. All those things go on currently. That is the regime that is in place.

As I outlined to the Leader of the Opposition in the question she asked earlier, some of the people who are there are there because they raped people or broke into someone's house and repeatedly assaulted someone in their home or because they committed arson and burnt down houses. We need an incarceration system for the worst of offences. We have to. All those services are there for people. The reason that some people have been moved into another unit is that they destroyed their cells. We cannot keep them there because there is nowhere to keep them. Somehow they managed to destroy them. It is really quite remarkable how they did it, but they did. When they are released into the broader prison population, they disrupt 90 per cent of the young people there who want to partake in recreational, educational and other opportunities. Some of the detainees who moved into unit 18 assaulted the other detainees when they were engaged in recreational activities or were in the yard. Some of them have committed scores of assaults on youth custodial officers. What are we to do? Are we to just say there is no consequence for that and release them into the community? If someone has a magical solution to that, please tell me, because all I hear is people saying, "Don't detain them." If we do not detain people in that environment for committing those sorts of offences, all we will have is more people in the broader community broken into, assaulted, harmed and that sort of thing, so we have to try to put in place measures to deal with people and help them get back on track, which is exactly what we are doing.

I note the minister advises—I have heard it a number of times—that the number of young people in detention has come down significantly. We have actually reduced the number because we put in place the Target 120 measures in the community and a lot of additional community welfare measures. We even backfilled the funding for the police and community youth centres. We are putting in place an on-country facility in the Kimberley so that the young people in the Kimberley, Pilbara and perhaps the goldfields will be able to go to a pastoral station for supervised attention and care, as opposed to coming to Banksia Hill. We are putting in place those measures. They do not get any attention because people just want to yell from the rooftops without taking into account what is occurring in the system to improve it for the young people. I want to say this to the Leader of the Opposition: we will continue to have a system that tries to get young people back on track, but we are also going to protect the public as best we can because innocent people deserve protection.