

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND JUSTICE STANDING COMMITTEE

Thirteenth Report — “Cultivating promise: Building Resilience and Engagement for At-Risk Youth through Sport and Culture”

Tabled on 15 August.

MS M.M. QUIRK (Girrawheen) [10.47 am]: This is a somewhat unusual procedure. The thirteenth report of the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee, “Cultivating promise: Building Resilience and Engagement for At-Risk Youth through Sport and Culture”, has already been tabled but I want to speak briefly on it. Although the report was tabled on Monday, it has gone under the radar, unlike that of my colleagues from the Education and Health Standing Committee. The thirteenth report can be said to be a less controversial subject but it is part of a continuum as another committee, the Education and Health Standing Committee, is looking at youth suicide. There are ongoing discussions in the community about preventing youth from engaging in extreme misconduct. This inquiry was about seeing how we can better engage people defined as “at-risk youth”. As stated in the report, it means those at risk of —

- engaging in negative or dangerous behaviours, such as truancy, self-harm, antisocial behaviour, drug/alcohol abuse, juvenile offending, and disengaging from education, training or employment;
- displaying poor social and communication skills, low self-esteem, emotional instability, suicidal intent;
- being impacted by homelessness, social and/or economic disadvantage, social isolation, family and domestic violence, substance abuse in the home/peer group/community, family transience, unemployment.

All members in the chamber know that many young individuals could be defined “at risk”. Our inquiry found that the age at which someone can be called a youth cannot be prescribed. Some of the programs that we looked at engage with people up to the age of 25. Again, we were relatively flexible about that. We were more concerned about the outcomes than we were about setting a rigid framework for the definition of “youth”.

Underlying all this is the thought that it costs about \$300 000 a year to keep a young person in detention. There are clear positive externalities to the bottom line of the budget. Even a portion of that money could be better diverted to youth programs so that youth can be engaged in either cultural or sporting activities. At the outset I must say that those activities are not about finding diamonds in the rough, elite sportspeople or potential artists who can make a living professionally. Rather, it is more about setting those kids on a path that allows them to become less marginalised in the community, more engaged and able to forge a more positive path in their adult future.

The timing of the report was quite tight, the reason being that the committee was anxious to table the report this week so that the government can reply to its recommendations prior to Parliament being prorogued. I thank committee staff Dr Sarah Palmer and Ms Franchesca Walker for their considerable efforts in pulling together in a short time frame what I think is an excellent report and for arranging the itinerary for our very flying visit to New Zealand and the hearings program here, during which we sought to get a snapshot of the sorts of activities undertaken rather than do an extensive audit of every program that is delivered.

They say that the definition of “madness” is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different outcome. As I said, we were very keen to finish the report so that our recommendations could be responded to before Parliament is prorogued. I say that the definition of “madness” is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different outcome. This is certainly the case with the response to our recommendations. I will read a little portion from the foreword of the report, which, I think, sums up why I am somewhat sceptical about the sort of government response we will get. It reads —

... this will be the last report of this Committee for the 39th Parliament. Accordingly, I take this opportunity to make observations about the committee process.

It has become increasingly evident that the commitment and diligence of the Committee in highlighting the need for reform, changes to public policy or the law is frequently met by a tepid, dismissive and dilatory response by government.

Despite the composition of the Committee, more often than not there was unanimous agreement on recommendations and the contents of reports. For that reason our work should not be so readily discounted.

The development of public policy and in-depth research through parliamentary committees is an important counterbalance to the politically expedient and hurried decision-making which the executive is often required to make.

I have made these observations in the present context because I regard the modest but considered findings and recommendations of this report as deserving of close examination and implementation.

I thank committee members deputy chair, Dr Tony Buti, and the members for Vasse, Balcatta and Collie–Preston for their efforts and for soldiering on despite having had less than satisfactory responses from the government on our previous reports. This might be a somewhat academic comment and it might sound as though our egos have been somewhat damaged because more notice was not taken of our reports, but I refer in particular to our report “In Safe Custody” in which we made a number of recommendations about police lockups. I have to say that if some of those recommendations had been responded to in a timely fashion, possibly the death of Ms Dhu in the Port Hedland lockup could have been averted. We expect these recommendations to be taken seriously. Frankly, there will be serious outcomes if they are ignored.

During the inquiry we found that access to programs is patchy throughout the state. In some cases, regional Western Australia is better serviced than metropolitan Perth, whereas in other cases the Perth metropolitan area does better than regional Western Australia. Access to programs is by no means guaranteed. For example, programs for culturally and linguistically diverse youth are not readily available in regional areas; on the other hand, there are numerous programs for Aboriginal youth, particularly in the Kimberley and Pilbara. In this regard, I take issue with the comments made by the Leader of the National Party in recent days about imposing a mining tax on Rio Tinto and BHP. I acknowledge the philanthropic work of both companies in the arts and sporting programs, particularly in the Kimberley and Pilbara. During the inquiry we certainly saw evidence of their contribution to a range of youth programs. Frankly, if those companies are taxed in the way that the Leader of the National Party suggested, unfairly in my view, it might have the unintended consequence of those companies deciding that they no longer need to contribute as much money to community programs as they do currently. Ironically, many of the programs that Rio and BHP sponsor are co-sponsored with royalties for regions. The Leader of the National Party should be mindful that these programs contribute to community cohesion and stop many young people from transitioning into crime.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge the many volunteers involved in many youth programs throughout Western Australia. Volunteers are often the unsung heroes. We frequently commend bushfire volunteers, but we forget about the range of volunteers who work across the state in all kinds of activities to support our young people and make sure that their futures are much brighter than would otherwise be the case.

I particularly want to single out two series of programs that are standouts in this state. They are programs run by the Edmund Rice Centre mainly in the northern suburbs. Its leadership in the community has been substantial and the work it does is tremendous. We hope that it continues for a long time. Likewise, the Clontarf Foundation has been a great export to other states. The significant thing about those programs is that they are able to demonstrate to funders tangible results and outcomes, which, of course, has meant a much more sustainable stream of funding. We found that these youth programs need to be sustained and cannot operate over just a short period. They need to enable kids to develop trust with whoever delivers the program. In most cases they really looked for greater engagement across the board, and the most successful programs had capacity for parents to be involved if they wanted to. All those things were very important. Role models within those programs were also essential. We saw a program in Melbourne run by the Jesuit Social Services that brings in professional artists to work with young people. That created a level of respect and allowed the kids to engage with and respect what was being discussed and the leadership and mentoring role of those professionals.

Less edifying was the evidence that we had from the police and community youth centres. It seems to me that PCYC in Western Australia has really lost its vision. Once police were formally removed from the centres and came in to run programs on a drop-in basis, the PCYC may as well put up the white flag. The closure of clubs, or even their lack of presence, in areas of high need is something that I know the member for Armadale will speak more on. For example, there is no PCYC in the northern suburbs, unless you count the Subiaco centre. It seems to me that PCYC centres are not where they need to be, PCYC’s vision is unclear, and the lack of engagement with police means that role models are not provided to develop those trusting relationships. I compare that with a program run in the notorious Mount Druitt in New South Wales. An article on the ABC website earlier this month entitled “Breaking Barriers program inspires Aboriginal youths in Mount Druitt to live a life without crime” states —

When 15-year-old Carly Bates attended her first session at Breaking Barriers, an Aboriginal youth program in western Sydney, she had low confidence and feared the police.

Two years later, her attitude towards authorities has turned around.

“At first it was really scary when they said the police were involved and we didn’t know what to do,” Carly said.

“But the police say they’re here to help us, and if we’re scared to go to them. We also have all our aunties and uncles here that we can go to whenever we want.”

Breaking Barriers is a fitness and mentorship program overseen by Indigenous elders and Mount Druitt police who hope to inspire young Aboriginal people to avoid a life of crime.

...

Breaking Barriers not only creates a social space for the local community through weekly fitness sessions, but it aims to make the young attendees comfortable with talking to authorities.

...

Local police have developed a close relationship with the Mount Druitt Indigenous community and will often alert elders like Mr Hamilton if they notice local youths “going down the wrong track”.

The article goes on. Police in this state are vacating this area, while other jurisdictions know that it works particularly well and have police more involved. As I said, that has an economic cost to it, and that is the price of juvenile detention of \$300 000 a year for one individual.

In conclusion I want to raise two other two issues. The first is that we heard evidence from the Department of Sport and Recreation that the halving of commonwealth government funding to Indigenous sports programs means fewer liaison officers will be employed in Indigenous communities in the Pilbara and Kimberley. This is an absolute shame. We have made a finding that the state government should make representations for this funding to be reinstated. The director general of the Department of Sport and Recreation also said this has a huge impact in regional Western Australia and needs to be reinstated as a matter of course.

The last issue relates to our overall finding that the delivery of these programs and their location is somewhat ad hoc; that is, there does not seem to be much communication between agencies or a responsibility or understanding of what impact these programs can have. Finding 11 in the report states —

The role of sport and the arts in assisting vulnerable young people is not acknowledged in the Department for Child Protection and Family Support’s At-Risk Youth Strategy 2015–2018.

Finding 12 also states —

The across-government Youth Strategic Framework “Our Youth — Our Future” contains admirable strategies for the engagement of at-risk youth in sport and culture, but the extent to which this has guided and continues to guide practice is unclear. In addition, no specific resources have been allocated to implementing the strategy.

If we value our young people and we want to assure them a bright, productive and engaged future, now is the time to invest. The good programs that we saw both in Australia and overseas should be more readily available across the state. That availability would be evidence that we really think our future generations can be future community leaders and that they need to be given the opportunities and chance to assume those roles.

MR C.D. HATTON (Balcatta) [11.07 am]: As the Chair of the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee indicated, this is the committee’s final report for the thirty-ninth Parliament. The chair has presented some valid observations about the committee process and the composition of the committee. I will leave it to the chair to make observations on the committee process. With regard to the composition of the committee, it has worked robustly with commitment—albeit with some disagreements here and there. One could say that those disagreements were, at times, problematic, but one could also say that those disagreements paved the way for a more constructive approach to forming the necessary outcomes that committees must reach. I can say with confidence that this committee has reported to the thirty-ninth Parliament with diligence to establish findings and recommendations that will promote and build stronger Western Australian communities.

The thirteenth report is aptly titled “Cultivating promise: Building Resilience and Engagement for At-Risk Youth through Sport and Culture”. The committee formed its terms of reference to inquire into youth engagement and resilience building in Western Australia with regard to what works, gaps in service delivery, differences in metropolitan and regional access to programs, and challenges related to being Indigenous, female or from a culturally and linguistically diverse community. A total of 21 findings and four recommendations were established. Recommendation 1 supports the need for federal funding for Aboriginal sport development officers and the exploration of alternative sources of funding in this area. This recommendation in part evolved from finding that Aboriginal development officers in Western Australia play a vital role in sports delivery, and that commonwealth funding has ceased.

Recommendation 2 relates to the need for the Department of Culture and the Arts to review its strategies and policy documents to ensure that they address the needs of at-risk youth. This recommendation in part evolved from the committee finding that the Department of Culture and the Arts does not have any dedicated programs to address youth or youth at risk and the two groups are largely absent from those policy documents, or from any documents.

Recommendation 3 relates to recommendation 2 and recommends that the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs act to include the Department of Culture and the Arts as a member of the Aboriginal Affairs Cabinet Sub-Committee. At this point I would like to note that the committee wishes to emphasise that a serious review, or a cross-departmental or interagency review or involvement, is dependent upon more than just meetings among bureaucrats. Evaluation needs to be robust and action needs to result from that evaluation.

Recommendation 4 is that appropriate resources be made available to government departments to conduct rigorous evaluations of the programs that they fund and that evaluation should include a qualitative component. Recommendation 4 encapsulates a host of findings, such as the fact that the measurement of outcomes of arts and sports programs for at-risk youth is either absent or lacking in clarity due to its complexity, short-term funding of arts and sports programs does not generally lead to long-term benefits, and economic analysis shows that investment in programs for at-risk youth delivers a very high social return.

I draw attention now to parts of the report that state that there is no system for collating information about who has participated in or benefited from sports and arts programs and that the delivery and provision of programs in WA could be perceived as ad hoc. However, I believe that it is not necessarily the case of being ad hoc. I think the committee would agree that there is much collective good being done here in Western Australia but that there is also a need for a broader base of program delivery with a targeted capture of young people. “Targeted” is the key word here. Engaging young people is often a challenge and those challenges need to be continually addressed through tiers of government, organisations, clubs and volunteers. In this inquiry the committee canvassed a wide range of organisations in Western Australia, Melbourne and New Zealand. The scope of delivery across the jurisdictions is broad ranging and very encouraging. It is also encouraging that there is a lot of good delivery and provision for youth in Western Australia at club and organisation level, including the well-established and successful state government KidSport program. This committee has presented recommendations that it believes will better engage and support our young people who sometimes and possibly often fall through the gaps.

In closing I would like to acknowledge the committee chair, Ms Margaret Quirk, MLA; principal research officer, Dr Sarah Palmer; and research officer, Ms Franchesca Walker. I thank the research officers for their dedicated work. I would also like to acknowledge the individual and collective contributions of fellow committee members deputy chair, Dr Tony Buti, MLA; Mr Mick Murray, MLA; and Ms Libby Mettam, MLA. I endorse and support the report being presented to the chamber today.

MR M.P. MURRAY (Collie–Preston) [11.14 am]: I too wish to speak to the thirteenth report of the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee. I would like to thank the staff who worked very hard to make sure that this report was put out on time. I also thank my parliamentary colleagues. As has been said, we had robust discussion, to say the least, many times, all with a view to presenting a report that will stand the test of time. I hope it is picked up by many.

The report addresses some of the disconnect that occurs among young people as they transition from being children to the middle range of youth to young adults. Some of the problems in different areas arise from the transition of migrants, who often come from extremely different backgrounds, into our society. Evidence was presented to the committee that those people are often frightened of the police and that they do not want to engage because where they come from the police are seen as people who may shoot or beat up people. We also heard about a young lady who wished to be a police officer but who was discouraged by her parents because they had come from a violent society in which the police were not respected. They believed the same would occur here, that their daughter would be treated with disdain if she joined the police and it would cause disruption within their small family unit. It seems that we have a lot of problems integrating different groups into our society.

The committee was able to achieve some outstanding things through its travel. I know we are often criticised for spending money on government travel, but the committee learned a lot from the places it visited—I will not name them all—especially about how well people can work together to engage different groups and that through mixing them in one pot, to use those words, they, one and all, can become Australians as such. That is something that young people take pride in. Through hard work and after being offered help they are able to understand each other’s backgrounds and are able to stop before making comments or making decisions about others.

The committee’s brief trip to New Zealand was certainly a highlight in that travel. Different groups over there experience the same problems that our Indigenous youth experience here. It was highlighted how they work

differently from how we do here. In a sense they work on mind and body before they work on integrating the physical person into society. The very strong belief among Maori is that if a person's body is feeling well and their mind is working well, they can get on with their life and deal with what is thrown at them. We saw that among rugby groups that attend camps to not only develop physical attributes for playing rugby, but also learn how to present themselves in public. The committee saw one group going past that I certainly would not like to be herding into one area! There was a lot of cheek and energy, but it was very pleasing to see the work those rugby clubs were doing to help these young fellas—all male at this stage—fit into society and show them how they to conduct themselves into the future. It was very enlightening.

Another thing that struck a chord with me occurred during our visit to Wellington. We met a group of very attractive and engaging young ladies of Muslim origin. They told us how they had found it difficult—their parents more so—being migrants trying to fit into the society in that area. They told us how their parents felt when they first saw young girls playing sport. They did not approve of it. Then it was pointed out that they could wear long-sleeved shirts, and the team adjusted its rules and allowed them to wear long-sleeved shirts and pants so that they could enjoy sport and become more integrated into a society that probably revolves too much around sport, unfortunately. I also mention the drop-in centres, which focused on many different activities in the arts. There was painting, crafts and that sort of thing, as well as music, which we know is prominent in the Indigenous society in New Zealand, with many famous bands coming out of there. We visited a recording studio set up in a drop-in centre. Approximately 25 to 30 kids of various ages were there on the day that we visited. They had mentors and leaders within the groups. I was talking to someone, not realising that he was a leader in those groups, and he was well versed, although he was very young. He was probably only 15 or 16 years of age and was already taking a leadership role in a community that had many problems. While we were there, we watched a short video they had produced about their health and wellbeing and where they fit into society. That sort of program is lacking in Western Australia, which is falling behind in this area because we focus on the very successful sport programs. But not everyone wants to play sport and we should not be looking only to the sporting arena for these young people. We are failing miserably to provide arts programs for these young people. In one session, we learned about an arts program, which is one of the most elitist programs that anyone has put before any committee on which I have been a member. That was very disappointing, because it was not about engagement but about financially supporting people who had already succeeded and had won prizes. That has to be done, yes, but not at the expense of other people—remembering that many artistic people do not fit into mainstream society. Members can look at a famous artist like Brett Whiteley. Was he a regular person in the arts or in society? No, he was not; in some sections of society he was considered a weirdo. We are pushing those people away in the sense that we give prizes and scholarships only to the top end of town. That is something we must address to encourage people from another part of our society to succeed. They may end up becoming a top guitarist. They have assets that have not been encouraged or utilised along the way. The focus on sport has been very good, but it has been to the detriment of many youth and women's programs in the arts.

Police and community youth centres should have a good look at that so they can re-engage with the community as a whole and not just with disaffected youth. I can tell members from experience that some people will not take their children to PCYCs because they see them as places where all the ratbags are dropped off. That is terrible and it has damaged the pride and structure of PCYCs, and we need to deal with that.

In finishing, I commend the report to the house. I could talk about many other things that the report goes into, but I now thank staff and my parliamentary colleagues for the robust, honest and frank discussion that has produced a report that should not be left on the shelf to gather dust over time.

MS L. METTAM (Vasse) [11.24 am]: I am pleased to comment on this report, "Cultivating promise: Building Resilience and Engagement for At-Risk Youth through Sport and Culture". I also acknowledge the work of committee staff with principal research officer, Dr Sarah Palmer and research officer Franchesca Walker, as well as my colleagues the member for Girrawheen, who is also the chair, and the members for Armadale, Balcatta and Collie-Preston for their contributions in working together on this important inquiry into youth at risk.

At-risk youth can be defined as those youth who engage in negative or dangerous behaviour, who display poor social skills and low self-esteem, and who can have suicidal intentions, and who can be impacted by homelessness. We know that youth who display those sorts of behaviours often face significant mental health issues in the early stages of life or later in life. The Barnett government has supported the value of treating mental health as a significant issue in our community with the creation of the position of Mental Health Commissioner, which was the first such appointment in not only the state but also the country, as well as through an 84 per cent increase in funding since it came to government.

It is a sad reflection on parts of our community that the number of children who have gone into foster care has increased by over 40 per cent since 2008 and that children are growing up in home environments where they are not adequately cared for, because some parents are not taking that responsibility. As a government, it is important that we do all we can to ensure that children and youth receive the best opportunities in life. This

report recognises that over the past two decades, the role of arts, sport and culture ensures that children and youth are given a foundation that builds resilience, which may otherwise not come from a home environment. This has resulted in a situation in which sports and arts are identified for not only encouraging physical and creative roles for children and youth, which was certainly highlighted during the many meetings we had throughout this inquiry, but also for building resilience in our youth. Michael Ungar, one of the foremost experts in resilience in children and director of the Resilience Research Centre, has identified nine factors that build a strong and resilient child, including structure, consequences, parent-child connections, lots of strong relationships, a powerful identity, a sense of control, a sense of belonging, culture and spirituality, rights and responsibilities, and safety and support. These are qualities that are highlighted in some of the best sports and arts programs in the country.

Due to commitments in my electorate, I was unfortunately unable to pursue the overseas and other travel that was part of this inquiry, but I understand from the reports and writings of this committee that some fantastic programs were identified in New Zealand and in Melbourne. Some great projects are also happening in our community. We have seen in recent times a shift from funding programs delivered directly through the Department of Sport and Recreation into investments in community groups and community-led organisations. I tip my hat to all volunteers who have supported this effort, because we recognise the great many hours that volunteers contribute to making our community a stronger and safer place. A good example is the Clontarf Foundation, which is a product of this funding. It was valuable to catch up with Gerard Neesham and the team at the Clontarf Foundation, which operates football academies for Indigenous boys in schools across Australia. From the comments made by the Clontarf committee at this facility the program is purpose driven and supports what kids require. The program is working and is providing some tough love and structure and the keys to resilience, which Michael Ungar had also identified. The rate of year 12 completion for these students is 60 to 70 per cent. Non-Clontarf boys, by contrast, are six times more likely to offend than the Indigenous youth involved in this program. This is an important message for at-risk youth and was focused on as part of this inquiry: every dollar invested in the Clontarf Academy returns \$8.13 to the community, which is a benefit of \$2.17 when we account for time and money invested. That goes to show the value of a community-driven program that is effective and has a great sense of purpose and structure.

According to the statistics, almost two-thirds or 64 per cent of Indigenous youths have engaged in sport and recreation in the last 12 months, which is slightly higher than the figures for the general population. This highlights a clear opportunity for purposeful engagement and what we can do in this space to ensure that those youths do not become mental health statistics. It also highlights the value that the Clontarf investment has delivered. According to Mission Australia, participation in sport is the same for Indigenous and non-Indigenous children, which backs up those comments.

I am aware that I do not have much more time, but another barrier to engagement in sport is the cost, so the state government has invested in KidSport. In my electorate, some 2 647 vouchers were distributed last year to kids who would otherwise be unable to afford to participate. There are a lot of grassroots programs being delivered, and there has been a shift. A general finding in this report that points to some of the recommendations is that there is a challenge in encouraging grassroots groups to deliver arts and sports programs outside government departments. There are costs and overlaps, a need for greater overall direction and a heavy requirement and obligation on community organisations to illustrate how they are best delivering state government funding. It is identified that such programs provide unique and special opportunities for positive engagement and that there is significant value in state government investments, but there is more work we can do as a state government to ensure that this funding and these programs are going into the areas of greatest need.

We have come a long way in addressing the needs of at-risk youth, and this report highlights some of the ways in which we may be able to improve delivery to support the investment by the state in this area.

DR A.D. BUTI (Armada) [11.33 am]: I also rise to speak on the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee's thirteenth report, "Cultivating promise: Building Resilience and Engagement for At-Risk Youth through Sport and Culture". I would like to commence by thanking my colleagues, including the committee chair, the member for Girrawheen, and the members for Balcatta, Vasse and Collie-Preston. In respect of the member for Collie-Preston, I was very privileged and fortunate to have been in the house last night when he made a very powerful and personal speech, which I consider to be one of the best speeches I have heard in my nearly six years in this chamber. Well done to the member for Collie-Preston; I am sure it would have taken a lot of courage to make that speech. I hope members who were not in the house at the time refer to the speech in *Hansard* because I am sure they will gain an insight into the problems that we are dealing with, particularly for family members of people who are addicted to drugs.

I also note the committee chair who, throughout the term of this Parliament, has been the recipient of very unfair criticism from the government, particularly with regard to a report on the activities of the former member for

Vasse. I think subsequent reports have proven that what we reported in that report was correct, and the personal attacks that were directed at the chair, the member for Girrawheen, have been shown to have been unwarranted and baseless.

I would also like to thank our very hardworking committee staff—principal research officer, Dr Sarah Palmer, research officer, Ms Franchesca Walker and, before Franchesca, Niamh Corbett. Committee work is very, very important. It is a very important educational experience for members of Parliament to be a committee member, because they work in a very different environment from that of the chamber, which is often adversarial. Although committees can be adversarial as well, there is an aim and purpose of trying to reach some form of consensus and agreement and to produce a report that will seek to assist government in making policy decisions that hopefully will benefit the whole community, as was outlined by the member for Balcatta in his speech not so long ago. Committee work is very important and committee reports are very important and, as the chair has mentioned, we have been disappointed in the government's responses to all our reports. It is important that government takes these reports seriously and responds accordingly to the recommendations and findings contained within them.

Each of the speakers before me has gone through various aspects of the report; I do not necessarily intend to traverse or repeat what has already been said by members before me. I think they have articulated various aspects of this report very, very well. I would like to concentrate on aspects regarding police and community youth centres and make some comments on Clontarf, but I will commence by referring to the comment printed at the beginning of the concluding chapter, chapter 5, on page 113 of the report. It is a comment made by Ron Alexander, the director general of the Department of Sport and Recreation; I quote —

With someone who has participated in community events, it is well documented that they are less likely to get involved in antisocial behaviour. So investing in arts, culture, sports and recreation, which governments do, is exactly that; it is an investment.

It is certainly an investment that can reap rewards down the track. As the chair mentioned, it costs roughly \$300 000 per year to incarcerate a juvenile in prison, and we can engage in more positive and properly structured sporting and cultural programs to hopefully reduce the probability and possibility of juveniles ending up behind bars. As was mentioned by the member for Vasse, some great results have come out of the Clontarf program—and I want to talk a bit about the Clontarf program. This is a program that was commenced by Gerard Neesham, a former elite sports person of considerable note. He began the program from humble beginnings, and I remember that his ideal vision for the program was on its last legs when the Carpenter government threw it a lifeline by injecting considerable funding. The federal Rudd government also injected considerable funding to allow the Clontarf vision and programs to be expanded. What is great about the Clontarf program is that it has bipartisan support, and may that forever last, because the results coming from the Clontarf vision are outstanding. I have personal experience of that through Cecil Andrews Senior High School, which is one of the schools in my electorate. The Clontarf program at that school has reaped very good rewards. The attendance rate of juveniles who are involved in the Clontarf program at that school is incredibly positive. As we know, one of the main issues that we need to address is to encourage children to attend school and thereby reduce the risk of them going off the rails and not engaging in a positive manner with society. Therefore, I commend the work of Clontarf, and may it continue to receive government support, which so far has been the situation.

I turn now to police and community youth centres. As we know, a few years ago, this government made the decision to basically gut PCYCs by removing the police element. I did not support that at the time, and I do not think any member of the opposition supported that at the time. There were also many government members who did not support that at the time. If I recall correctly, the member for Geraldton was very vocal in his opposition to the police being basically removed from PCYCs. In the hearing that the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee had with Mr Gillespie, the chief executive officer of WA PCYC, I put a question about the connection between police and PCYCs. The police now have no formal legal jurisdiction over PCYCs. The police have engaged in a memorandum of understanding with WA PCYC, but for all intents and purposes the strong police component that has historically been connected with PCYCs is no more.

The member for Girrawheen has mentioned where the PCYCs are situated. Mr Gillespie mentioned during the hearing that there should be a PCYC presence in the City of Wanneroo. However, there is none. There is also now no PCYC in Armadale. Armadale has the highest, or near highest, crime rate in the metropolitan area outside the CBD. However, we do not have a PCYC in Armadale. I do not blame Mr Gillespie for this per se, because he has a finite budget. It is appalling that the government has decided that the police should not be involved with PCYCs. It is also appalling that Armadale does not have a PCYC. During the committee's hearing with Mr Gillespie, the member for Vasse put to him the following question —

Just picking up on some comments made earlier about finding a place or infrastructure for PCYCs—do you always need that? Do you need a permanent building?

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Thursday, 18 August 2016]

p4883b-4890a

Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Chris Hatton; Mr Mick Murray; Ms Libby Mettam; Dr Tony Buti

Mr Gillespie replied that, no, they do not always need a permanent building. He went on to say —

But more importantly, we are working at the moment with Nathan Morton, the member for Forrestfield. Midland has been closed because of refurbishment.

He went on to say that Nathan Morton has a problem with young people in his area, and they help him out. Mr Gillespie was then asked how that had come about, and he said they had received a call from the minister's office.

Therefore, the Minister for Police does get involved in situations when her own members of government ring her up. I am sure that if I had contact with the minister to see whether I could get the presence of a PCYC in my electorate, she would say that PCYCs are completely independent and make their own decisions. It may have been the minister or her office—maybe it was not the minister personally, but there was a call from the minister's office asking the PCYC to get involved in assisting the member for Forrestfield. There is nothing wrong with assisting the member for Forrestfield. He is doing his job as the local member. However, it would be nice if I could also get that sort of assistance. If I rang the minister's office tomorrow, would she also ring the PCYC to see whether it would assist down in Armadale?

Mrs L.M. Harvey: It would depend on the issue. I do that for a number of members all the time as part of my work.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P. Abetz): I give the call to the member for Murray-Wellington.

Mrs L.M. Harvey: I do that all the time. That is an offensive comment.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister for Police! Members, the member for Murray-Wellington has the call.