

JUVENILE OFFENDING — TARGET 120

384. Dr A.D. BUTI to the Minister for Child Protection:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment to reducing juvenile reoffending and supporting at-risk young people and their families—a commitment demonstrated by this government's Target 120 program. Can the minister outline to the house how Target 120 will improve outcomes for Western Australia's most challenging youth offenders?

Ms S.F. McGURK replied:

It is my pleasure to outline to the house how Target 120 will work. It is a proactive approach and a sophisticated approach, and I think it is a positive approach to tackling juvenile justice in this state. For many years, the Western Australia Police Force has told us that it can identify the families and young people who are likely, without proper intervention to stop the trajectory, to end up working their way through the juvenile justice system through community orders and Banksia Hill Detention Centre and then, sadly, graduating to the adult corrections system.

In the last state budget the McGowan government delivered on an election commitment and allocated \$20 million of new money to funding the Target 120 initiative. In fact, we are expecting that over the life of the program we will be able to work with 300 young people and their families. The idea is that we work with those young people before they get into Banksia Hill; they may have had some foray into the juvenile justice system through community orders and the like. We then get agreement between those young people and their families that they be allocated a caseworker through a not-for-profit organisation, who then works with them and their families to understand why they are offending and whether they need any additional support. It might be that they need stable housing; it might be that they are having difficulty at school, attending school or getting to school, or participation at school; it could be that there are mental health or drug and alcohol abuse issues in their family; financial issues; and domestic violence issues and the like. We have a multidisciplinary approach to work out what that child and their family needs to get them on track.

Some of the early work by Youth Focus in the Armadale area, coordinated by Save the Children, has been very promising. It has shown that when we have a multidisciplinary approach, as I said, and we target the needs of vulnerable people, we may have a much better chance of changing that trajectory and keeping them out of the justice system. Importantly, we are hoping not only to get a better outcome for those young people and a safer community, but also to establish that this is in fact a much more cost-effective program. Importantly, and unusually, we had Treasury advocating in the budget process that we allocate new money to this social justice program. We are confident that if we can get the interventions done properly and early, we can get better social outcomes, a safer community and a better spend of public sector money.

I was particularly pleased to get a letter from the member for Kalgoorlie, who is not here today, congratulating me on the Target 120 initiative and asking when it could be rolled out for Kalgoorlie. I look forward to delivering it. We will be rolling it out throughout the state, but initially it will be in Bunbury and Armadale.