

MINISTER FOR CORRECTIVE SERVICES — PERFORMANCE

467. Dr D.J. HONEY to the Premier:

I was mesmerised by the answer from the Minister for Homelessness! My question is to the Premier. I refer to suggestions from the WA Prison Officers' Union secretary, Andy Smith, that corrective services have been on the backburner and for the Minister for Corrective Services to be relieved of his roles in multiple portfolios while public servants rally for better pay.

- (1) Has the minister lost control of his portfolio responsibilities?
- (2) Does the minister retain the Premier's unequivocal support to retain the corrective services portfolio?

Mr W.J. Johnston: Ask me a question!

The SPEAKER: Minister, you are not to interject. I call the Premier to answer.

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

- (1) No.
- (2) Yes.

The reality is in every state in Australia, at every point in time going back to 1788, the prisons portfolio has had issues—in fact, 26 January 1788. I can put a date on it!

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I am going with 26 January. It always has been one of those portfolios because it deals with range of people who have been convicted of, on many occasions, very serious crimes and behavioural issues are part and parcel of that portfolio. The minister is doing a terrific job to manage a very difficult portfolio. I hear some of the member's complaints, including that he has too many portfolios. Today I looked at the portfolio load of some of the opposition members. Some of them have eight portfolios. He has four. The opposition leader has eight. If four is too many, why has the opposition leader got eight? What is the member's complaint? With its very low work ethic and very low amount of effort it puts into anything as an opposition, the member can have double the number of portfolios and that is okay, yet the minister can have half the number of portfolios and that is not. Does the member not think that is logically inconsistent?

In any event, there have been some issues in Banksia Hill Detention Centre. Essentially, 16 or 18 detainees have been moved because they were destroying their cells and behaving in ways that were disrupting the entire estate. The remaining 80 detainees—two were removed and have come back now, so 82—have had a much more congenial atmosphere created inside Banksia Hill to allow them to go on the pathway to rehabilitation far more easily, with the most disruptive detainees taken out of the estate. The reason was behavioural issues. That is staring everyone in the face.

To try to say that the behaviour of an individual was therefore the fault of the minister I just think is wrong. It is just wrong. I know that is the way that people try to portray these things, but it is just not correct. Individuals are there for a whole range of reasons and they have had very difficult lives outside detention, but their behaviour is unacceptable, and it is causing huge grief to the other people who are detained and especially to the people who work there. The very decent people who work there, often with very altruistic motives to try to put young people back on to a correct pathway in life to give them opportunities and hope for the future, have to deal with this incredible situation. That is why some difficult decisions have had to be made. No-one has an alternative solution to that. Although people complain about it, no-one has an alternative solution that is effective and safe to the one that this government has put in place.