

CORRECTIVE SERVICES — YOUTH DETENTION

Matter of Public Interest

THE SPEAKER (Mrs M.H. Roberts) informed the Assembly that she was in receipt within the prescribed time of a letter from the Leader of the Liberal Party seeking to debate a matter of public interest.

[In compliance with standing orders, at least five members rose in their places.]

MS L. METTAM (Vasse — Leader of the Liberal Party) [3.05 pm]: I move —

That this house condemns the WA Labor government's refusal to adequately address its ongoing mismanagement of corrective services, leaving a failing minister at the helm.

This is a very appropriate motion to be moving today and it is certainly a matter of public importance. A few short weeks ago, history was made in Western Australia for all the wrong reasons. Under this government's watch, our state has recorded the first death of a child in custody. This death was entirely preventable. This child was incarcerated in an adult prison and isolated in his cell for an average of 22 hours a day. I asked a question in the house today about unit 18. Unit 18, which was a creation of this Labor government, has been an unmitigated disaster since the very beginning, and has resulted in the first juvenile death in custody in Western Australia. The juveniles at unit 18, who were at Banksia Hill Detention Centre until July last year, were out of control. That was due to a complete lack of rehabilitation at that facility. That is what our shadow Minister for Corrective Services was referring to when he made some comments back in January last year. Labor has been in government now for almost seven years. What is clear is that it has no authority in terms of its management of the corrective services portfolio. The unit 18 facility has lurched from crisis to crisis. The revelations in the ABC report on this issue are stark evidence that this government is not in control of this portfolio and certainly not in control of unit 18.

There is a history to this. Former Premier Mark McGowan likened detainees in unit 18 to terrorists. That was quite clearly a populist ploy to justify the unjustifiable action of creating that unit. Children's Court President Hylton Quail has said —

“When you treat a damaged child like an animal, they will behave like one and if you want a monster this is how you do it,” ...

We are talking about the isolation of individuals in their cells for up to 22 hours a day. We expected things to be different. The new Premier had indicated that there might be a change of approach. The new Minister for Corrective Services was on the record in opposition as being a strong advocate in these areas. However, the Western Australian community at large has been let down. Quite obviously, this family has been let down as well.

There is a community safety aspect to ensuring that there is good rehabilitation when juveniles are taken into detention, but that just has not been there. Cleveland Dodd was refused any possible opportunity of rehabilitation and he was robbed of a future because of the government's negligence in this area. Although we have seen and heard the Minister for Corrective Services at Dumas House with his staff practicing messages and trying to come up with cheap ways of criticising the opposition, he has failed in his duty of care and commitment to better support community safety and rehabilitate these individuals while they are in custody. He has failed to support the rehabilitation of young offenders and created an environment that almost guarantees they will be worse off when they are let out of incarceration, if they actually survive it. To that end, he has failed to keep our community safe.

On the day the Western Australian public learnt about Cleveland's attempted suicide, a reporter asked the Minister for Corrective Services whether anything would change at unit 18, and this was the minister's response —

Not really because everything that is being done, everything that can be done at the moment is being done ...

I will give another quote —

We're delivering as best we can with the current resources and the current infrastructure ...

This was either one of two things. It was either blatantly misleading or a demonstration of just how out of touch the minister and this government have become in their duties and responsibilities to actually govern this state. If that is the best the Cook Labor government can deliver in the area of corrective services, quite clearly, this state has been let down. We know this follows a pattern of a government that cannot govern. The minister said —

Not really because everything that is being done, everything that can be done at the moment is being done ...

They are the comments from the minister. It is thanks to the insights of the ABC that we now know there was so much more that could have been done to prevent this stain on our state and the tragedy for that family—the first death of a child in custody. Let us start with the cold fact that the prison officers on duty that night were not provided with radios to be able to communicate with each other. The officer who found Cleveland hanging in his cell did not know about the suicide threats that were made 13 minutes earlier because he did not have access to proper equipment. He was also unable to call a code red to alert nurses across the prison system that urgent care was necessary, because

he did not even have a radio. I again go back to the minister's comments that everything that could be done was being done. How on earth is that the case, when the prison officers do not even have some of the most basic equipment? We are talking about precious minutes here. Tragically and unfortunately, suicide attempts have become all too common at this facility under this government's watch. I attended a Diwali festival with other ministers on Sunday night and the security staff on the ticket gate had radios. The volunteer staff had radios at that event, so how is it that in a state as prosperous as Western Australia —

Ms R. Saffioti: Are you serious? I mean, honestly. That is a ridiculous comparison. That is such an off comparison. I can't believe it.

Ms L. METTAM: It is an observation. How can they not have the basic equipment at that facility?

Ms R. Saffioti interjected.

Ms L. METTAM: There is also the issue of how CCTV footage —

Ms R. Saffioti interjected.

Point of Order

Dr D.J. HONEY: Point of order, Deputy Speaker.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, Deputy Premier. It is okay, member for Cottesloe.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

Debate Resumed

Ms L. METTAM: There is also the issue of how the CCTV of Cleveland's cell had been covered by a strip of toilet paper since mid-afternoon. As members know, routine check-ups are meant to be required every 15 minutes for juvenile detainees, either by CCTV or in person, and those checks are meant to be logged manually. Prison officers would have been aware almost immediately that Cleveland's CCTV had been covered up, yet nothing was done about it. If the prison officers had a clear view of what was occurring in that cell, as we later learnt from the involvement of a broken vent, they would surely have rushed to his aid. How can the minister tell the community that everything that could have been done had been done?

Speaking of air vents, Cleveland should never have been allowed in that cell in the first place. The air vent in that cell was reported broken back in December, apparently, meaning that the cell should not have been occupied by a detainee. A contractor was in the cell the day before to replace the vent, which was after Cleveland had made an attempt on his life, yet the repairs were never undertaken. We are also unsure why Cleveland was not moved to another cell. We are talking about a detainee who had a history of self-harm. Clearly, many questions need to be answered. When the minister stood on the front steps of Parliament House and told Western Australians that nothing more could be done at unit 18, I would say that he misled the community. Not being honest with the media and in here is one thing, but to also tell the parents that nothing more could have been done, when clearly there could have been, is unconscionable.

As I have stated, this government does not know how to govern. That is obvious when we understand what needs to be done to ensure that the situations unfolding at Banksia Hill Detention Centre and Casuarina Prison are resolved. It is not hard to come to that conclusion when I refer to some of the comments the minister made publicly about the problems associated with juvenile detainees and the challenges they face daily at unit 18, and I quote —

The problem we confront is this particular cohort of young people regularly self-harmed wherever they were ...

And I again quote the minister —

It wasn't something that is directly associated with Unit 18.

We are talking about 19 incidents of self-harm reported in September this year that were not directly related to the fact that the detainees at unit 18 were effectively spending the whole month in solitary confinement. We are talking about 22 hours a day. Former Children's Court president Denis Reynolds warned that these lockdowns would lead to increased risks and realisation of self-harm and suicide. We have heard from many advocates in this space as well. It is quite clear that locking anyone in a concrete room with no mental stimulation, no exercise, no social connection and no sunlight will obviously lead to significant mental health problems.

We are seeing a number of significant challenges. We are meant to be rehabilitating these juveniles so that they will have a chance to make a meaningful contribution to society and we are also meant to be limiting and ensuring that they will not be a threat to the community when they are released, but instead we are seeing quite the opposite. We are seeing confinement of over 22 hours in an adult prison. The daily average for out-of-cell hours in September was a mere one hour and 46 minutes, a number that is increasingly becoming shorter and shorter. That is 41 minutes

fewer than the time detainees were allowed out of their cells in June this year. It raises the question: what did the government think was going to happen the minute they were released from prison?

We are strong advocates of community safety and we certainly support effective rehabilitation of juvenile detainees, but this is an absolute failure of this government. To have Premier Roger Cook call unit 18, which is a construct of the Labor government, a necessary evil is a damning comment. There is nothing necessary about the circumstances that led to the death of Cleveland Dodd. They were caused by malpractice and a lack of resourcing of our prison staff. They are all issues that were preventable. These issues start at the top. They start with ensuring that there is proper resourcing, and it is clear there has been an abject failure of the administration and the management of this portfolio. The minister and the Premier have also illustrated that they are completely out of their depth in corrective services, and there is obvious concern about how the Minister for Corrective Services has misled the public.

I realise other members would like to speak, but what we have seen here is an absolute tragedy. A death of a juvenile in custody in Western Australia is an absolute stain on our state. Our hearts go out to everybody who is impacted by this event. I hope that this matter was raised at the recent state conference of the Labor Party. For a party that often talks about itself as the party of social conscience, I hope that there was some strong advocacy about the direction that it is taking when it comes to unit 18 and the creation of this unit under the Labor government, which has gone from crisis to crisis and ended with an absolute tragedy, a creation of the government's own making.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Treasurer! Minister for Housing!

Several members interjected.

Point of Order

Dr D.J. HONEY: It is just a constant cacophony of interjections from the other side.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Cottesloe. Members, you will get an opportunity to respond. Carry on, Leader of the Liberal Party.

Debate Resumed

Ms L. METTAM: The opposition has been consistent in its approach and its opposition —

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister for Housing!

Ms L. METTAM: We have been consistent in our approach to unit 18. It should never have been allowed to open in the first place.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members! Leader of the Liberal Party, you are sort of inviting these sorts of interjections from what you are contributing to this debate, so if you want to avoid it, direct your comments towards the chair and not towards individual government members.

Ms L. METTAM: We have been consistent in our approach to unit 18. It should never have been allowed to open and must be closed immediately. It is not a rehabilitation facility. It is entirely punitive. It completely contradicts the advice of every single social justice advocate in this state. While we are here to debate in this place, a scourge on this government is also the lack of investment in the rehabilitation of juvenile offenders. The lack of rehabilitation illustrates that this government has not only failed the family of Cleveland Dodd, but failed to keep the community safe. The heartbreaking reality is that for many the only pathway they see out of this tragic state of suffering is to take their own life.

What happened to Cleveland Dodd is an absolute tragedy. There has been warning after warning. We know that it does not have to end that way. We know there is more we can do for these detainees and a lot more that we could have done for Cleveland Dodd. Now I am urging you to get on the right side of history.

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Leader of the Opposition) [3.25 pm]: I rise to contribute to this motion brought to the chamber by the member for Vasse —

That this house condemns the WA Labor government's refusal to adequately address its ongoing mismanagement of corrective services, leaving a failing minister at the helm.

I am reminded that this is very similar to discussions that have been held in the chamber before. A different minister was in place, who was removed from this portfolio after we saw the calamitous situation that developed at Banksia Hill Detention Centre. Just a few days before his eventual retirement as Premier, the former Premier called

it the Banksia Hill riot. Remember there was a riot. After seven years of mismanagement of corrective services under this government, we descended to the point at which the institution suffered \$30 million worth of damage in a riot. That was under the mismanagement of this government. When we say that unit 18 needs to be closed, we are effectively saying that unit 18 should never have been opened. Unit 18 would be unnecessary if the Labor government had managed the portfolio correctly for the seven years in which it has held it. Seven years of neglect and mismanagement have come to this. It has come to the point at which one facility is so badly damaged that it cannot house the people who are destined to be within it. The government has had to develop a unit for children in an adult prison.

What have we seen? We have seen a young person take their life in the most tragic of circumstances. The minister has made statements about the circumstances around that in this place and in public, and has refused to set the record straight. The minister had a chance; at question time I gave him the chance to correct the record. Did he take the chance? No. He doubled down. Now reading reports in the press, the distraught mother of that young person believes the minister has not been telling the truth. I invite the minister to take the opportunity, when he eventually gets to his feet and responds to this, to explain himself, to apologise for what he has said and to apologise to the mother who is grieving and is being unnecessarily, in my view, traumatised by the minister's lack of clarity around the events. I urge the minister to put the record straight as a matter of absolute priority when he gets to his feet to talk about this situation.

As I said, there have been seven years of neglect. The previous minister is in the house. No doubt he will make a contribution about what a great job he did during the six years or so that he was in charge of the facility, but we know that we have gone from Banksia Hill being a facility with capacity. When this government came to office, it was functioning well. Despite whatever rewriting of history this government might want to do about the development of the situation, when this government took office, Banksia Hill was functional and doing its job; people were kept safe; programs for rehabilitation were in place; and there was order instead of chaos.

This government has delivered nothing but chaos in the time it has been in office. Regardless of whether it was Premier Cook, former Premier McGowan, one corrective services minister, another corrective services minister or a former corrective services minister who was in this place and has since retired, we have seen a slow and steady descent into chaos. Under the minister sitting opposite, the former minister, the member for Cannington, we saw the disastrous culmination of events at Banksia Hill. Now, under this minister, we have seen an equally tragic result at unit 18—something that should never have happened. A young person apparently called for help. No doubt the circumstances will be well outlined in future reports, but we know enough to say that it was a failure of the government and the department to ensure that people were kept in a safe place and that a program was available for those people. Let us not forget that, unlike former Premier McGowan's characterisation of people as terrorists, studies by the Telethon Kids Institute show that nine out of 10 of the inmates had impairments, often brought about by exposure to alcohol or drugs at an early age or at the fetal development stage.

This situation is a tragedy that we have seen unfolding seemingly endlessly since this government came to office. It has attempted to completely gloss over the issues and blame the staff—the people who are put in an impossible position due to understaffing, poor resources and infrastructure that has been left to fall into wrack and ruin due to situations in which people were locked up for most of the day. Obviously, people are not easy to deal with when they are treated like that. It would not matter who it is; basically, if someone is put into solitary confinement, they will become problematic and angry, and justifiably so.

This government needs to find solutions. This minister has been in place for nearly six months and he has yet to demonstrate that he has any hope of providing solutions. Mr Marney was appointed to provide advice. That advice was given at the end of his six-month contract. Apparently an extension of that contract was neither wanted nor taken. What was the result of that and what will happen in the future that will convince Western Australians that things will be different from what they have been in the past?

We go back to this steady unfolding of seven years of neglect by this government—seven years of denial about the importance of making sure that the centre is well run. Earlier this year we were told that facilities on country would be provided in other parts of the state, including in the Kimberley. Answers to questions asked in this house revealed that that was still at the planning stage and nothing had been done towards putting those solutions in place, despite there being a demonstrated need for it. This government has been sitting on its hands for so long while we have seen a steady decline not only in the situation at Banksia Hill, but also in the youth justice system throughout the state. There is a lack of solutions and a lack of intervention at an earlier age. We know the story about the Target 120 program, which never seems to get rolled out. There will always be someone put in place. There will always be someone who will be helped by it, but it never seems to get to the people who need it.

Ms S.F. McGurk: It's a success story so you don't want to talk about it.

Mr R.S. LOVE: As a former Minister for Child Protection, I do not think the member should be speaking up at the moment because some pretty deplorable situations developed under her watch. We know what happened when

people spoke up about them, do we not? Perhaps it would be better if the minister remained silent and listened rather than interjecting on me when I have the opportunity to speak. She will have the opportunity to speak in a short while.

This has occurred right throughout this cabinet. They are all responsible for the mess that happened under the former Minister for Corrective Services, the member for Cannington. They are all responsible for the mess that happened under Premier McGowan because they have all been in the cabinet. The current Premier was second in charge in that cabinet when this disaster unfolded steadily and slowly and then things happened in a rush. It was just a tragedy in the making. All the ministers were players in it. All the ministers in this government, except the newest one on the other side, has responsibility for this.

Ms M.J. Davies interjected.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Yes, the member for Balcatta was parliamentary secretary of the cabinet, so he was sitting in on those discussions as well. All of the ministers should own it, fix it and accept responsibility, especially the minister, who should correct the record.

MR P. PAPALIA (Warnbro — Minister for Corrective Services) [3.36 pm]: We just heard a bumbling, meandering, incoherent and difficult morass of mixed-up ideas, which was hard to sift through to identify some point. However, fortunately, one consistent point was made by both the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Vasse. We now know that the opposition has broken cover on its position with respect to juvenile detention, but especially the Liberal Party of Western Australia is saying that we should shut unit 18.

Let us reflect a little on what that means. Juvenile detention in Western Australia was compromised in 2012 when the former Barnett government shut one of only two juvenile detention facilities in the state—Rangeview Remand Centre—and moved all the detainees into Banksia Hill Detention Centre. At the time, I was not even the shadow minister because I had been given other portfolios, but I was the shadow minister for about seven years—four years during that time, and then three years later, I took on the portfolio again. I made a public statement warning the Liberal Party, the party of the now member for Vasse, that it would regret that decision. The Leader of the Opposition stated that Banksia Hill was working well when the coalition government took over. I remind the member that he appears to have slept through the last term of his government. There was a riot in 2013. For the very first time in Western Australia's history, the most disruptive juveniles from Banksia Hill were moved into an adult prison under Joe Francis, the then Minister for Corrective Services. That is how well it was working!

The member for Moore should listen up because I know he was not paying attention at the time. The juveniles that we have now inherited in our detention facility number far fewer than under the Barnett government. Today there are 66 juveniles in Banksia Hill and 10 in unit 18. During the former government's time in office, that number was more than double. On a daily average, in 2012, it was around 189. There are far fewer juveniles in detention in Western Australia now under our government. Someone has to harm other Western Australians for the courts to send them to Banksia Hill or to unit 18. They have either caused very serious harm or they have carried out multiple incidents of harm to other Western Australians or they have done both for the courts to deem them so unsafe that they must go to Banksia Hill or unit 18. Within that cohort of juveniles—all of whom, as I said publicly in response to questions at the time of Cleveland's death, have tragic stories—it is almost a universal experience that they have been neglected or abused, or both, since they were babies. That is a fact. The vast majority of the juveniles have been damaged for a very long time by the time the justice system receives and encounters them. That is a sad truth.

That aside, in June, the Premier and I announced a plan to address the challenges of juvenile detention that we inherited from the former government. The first thing we said we would do is review infrastructure in the juvenile estate, and that has been conducted and the findings of that review are being considered now within government. The second thing we said we would do was increase staff numbers across the estate, particularly focusing in the near term on prison officers, because we were able to access them more easily than trying to recruit and train youth custodial officers, which we are doing as well, noting that in the previous 12 months, they had confronted 459 assaults, and that had resulted in a large number either being on compensation or health leave or departing the service. We said that we would address that with additional staff and that in the near term it would be prison officers. The third thing we said we would do was seek out an Aboriginal health provider to assist and enhance the provision of health services inside juvenile detention. Negotiations are underway with the Derbarl Yerrigan Health Service to achieve that.

We also said that we would ask the Telethon Kids Institute to come back into Banksia Hill Detention Centre to recommence the studies that it had done at the end of the Barnett government's term that identified things like the prevalence of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder and other neurological impairment across the juvenile population. We are working on that. We have asked the institute specifically what we want it to do: assist us by recommencing its research, but focusing on assisting with individualised response plans for juvenile detainees. The problem with getting that going is not with us; as I understand it, it is with the capacity of the Telethon Kids Institute to find

a researcher to assist. The fifth initiative that we announced was the creation of an Aboriginal mentor scheme—both elders and younger people. There will be a pool of people so that at all times we will have the capacity to draw upon people who are respected and capable of delivering mentoring to both juveniles and staff in the detention population. That is underway. I have written to a large number of people and others are being approached, and we are creating a pool. We are going to need a pool because they are not necessarily going to be there full-time. There will be a pool of people, many of whom are working or are working part-time or are semi-retired. There will need to be numerous people to enable us to have a delivery of service.

All those things are underway, but the primary and most significant, impactful thing that we did in June was to ask that the department shift its policy for transferring juveniles. Unit 18, which is inside an adult prison but is isolated from the adults, is an Australian-standard adult men's prison unit. It is much more hardened and secure than any of the buildings at Banksia Hill. We asked that it stop shuttling individuals between the two locations, destabilising both of them, and look to provide stability and safety by housing the most complex, challenging and very often dangerous and violent individuals in suitable facilities at unit 18. That was happening. The Liberal Party spokesperson has changed from calling on us in January to shut Banksia Hill to calling on us now to shut unit 18. Members opposite have all endorsed it. The member for Vasse and the member for Moore have demanded that we shut unit 18. The only reason they have done that is that Banksia Hill is better. They have failed to acknowledge that. There are significantly better conditions at Banksia Hill as a result of the shift to house that small cohort, which today numbers 10, in a more suitable facility at unit 18.

We have acknowledged that. The President of the Children's Court has acknowledged it. The Inspector of Custodial Services has acknowledged it. There is no other choice for a physically suitable building in Western Australia to house this small cohort than unit 18, so what the member for Vasse and the member for Moore are doing by demanding that we shut unit 18 is demanding one of only two options. One is that the Liberal Party wants to release into the community juveniles who have been deemed unsuitable and unsafe for the community. They are saying, "Let them go out there to harm people. Let them go out to harm more Western Australians."

Ms L. Mettam: No, we're not.

Mr P. PAPALIA: There is one other alternative, member for Vasse, and that is that they all go back to Banksia Hill to unsuitable accommodation and start ripping that place apart in the way that they have been ripping apart the Australian-standard adult men's prison in recent months.

I am going to show members a few items that illustrate what has been going on in unit 18. It might demonstrate a little more clearly why some individuals received less access to out-of-cell hours because of their behaviour and why the only way of managing their behaviour is through confining them and preventing them from hurting themselves and other people, or they are left unfettered to assault staff and others, as they did at Banksia Hill on 459 occasions in the 12 months prior to June. All these items were manufactured in the last few months by juveniles in unit 18 using their hands and improvised devices. The first one I am showing members is a shiv made from plastic with a bit of shoelace wrapped around it to enable the individual to stab staff. It is used as a knife—a deadly weapon—against staff. That one looks pretty innocuous, but it is very dangerous and very frightening and is capable of inflicting great harm on anyone who is unfortunate enough to be hit with it. I am not really sure what this thing here is. I think the metal in it is the frame from a call button inside one of the security cells at unit 18 in the Australian-standard adult men's prison. It was fabricated into an improvised weapon. This thing here is from plumbing housed behind a metal mesh frame that is enclosed by a wired metal framework that is riveted into the wall. The frame has been ripped off and the plumbing dug out of the wall and used as an axe. This thing here is the metal frame that I am talking about. It was around that particular mesh, but this was a vent or something of that description in the wall of an Australian-standard adult men's prison cell. It was riveted to the wall in the cell but was removed by hand or an improvised device and used by the juvenile to attack staff. The final one I am showing members is a two-kilogram showerhead that was cemented into the wall of an Australian-standard adult men's cell in unit 18. It was chiselled out of the concrete, placed in a sock and turned into an improvised mace.

The nature of the individuals and the behaviours of the people who are housed in unit 18 are challenging, complex and very often dangerous. If the Liberal Party of Western Australia and the National Party of Western Australia compel us to shut unit 18 and send that small cohort of juveniles back to Banksia Hill before they have been assessed by a multidisciplinary team and identified as suitable to go into the great population of 60 or 70 juveniles at any one time, and be in accommodation that is not suitable, then they are demanding that we expose all the other juveniles and staff to a very dangerous threat. I say that because the opposition's spokesperson said it is simple: you can house them in demountables. This was ripped out of an Australian Standard maximum-security adult men's cell, and the Leader of the Liberal Party is saying, "Let the same people be housed in a demountable." Imagine how many weapons they could fabricate from a demountable. It is extraordinary that she would be so arrogant as to assume that she knows better than the department, the staff and the people who are dealing with this challenge on a daily basis. She did not even bother educating herself on the nature of the challenge that we confront. All she has done is be the ambulance chaser in chief. She has applied the same approach she applies to the health system to juvenile detention.

For the first time, though, I am glad, because what she has done is pin herself to shutting unit 18 at a time when the government and community of Western Australia have no alternative. There are only two options available.

Ms L. Mettam interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Leader of the Liberal Party!

Mr P. PAPALIA: The member for Vasse and the Liberal Party of Western Australia are saying let them go into the community and do harm to others or go back to Banksia Hill Detention Centre and do harm to everybody else.

MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan — Deputy Premier) [3.52 pm]: The Minister for Corrective Services today outlined exactly why we have to choose the path we do for unit 18. It was one of the most powerful demonstrations I have seen in this place. I think we all watched and learnt a lot about the severe situation that would occur if those detainees were sent back to the Banksia Hill Detention Centre —

Mr P. Papalia: Without being assessed.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: — without being assessed.

We know of course that Banksia Hill was impacted in May this year. The core infrastructure was impacted, and, as a result, the capacity and ability to manage all those detainees was severely impacted, and the government had to make a choice. The choice was made to protect the existing detainees, the public and the workers. The Leader of the Liberal Party again demonstrated today that she will say anything and do anything for a headline. She will pretend to be an expert on everything. Her performance today was an absolute disgrace. She is comparing the training and equipment of prison officers to security guards at Diwali. What an insult to all those who work in our justice system! It is an insult because the Leader of the Liberal Party is saying that they are not properly trained.

Ms L. Mettam interjected.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: That is what you are saying. You are saying that they have no specific training to work in the justice system.

Ms L. Mettam: I didn't say that at all.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Yes, you did. You will say anything; you will do anything. You basically ran a whole inquiry in your 15 minutes. As the Minister for Corrective Services stated, there are a number of serious investigations underway into what happened by a number of parties and groups. You stood up and you were like the expert. You were like saying: "I have done all the research and this is the conclusion. This is what happened."

Ms L. Mettam interjected.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: You listen—for once!

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the Liberal Party!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: What you have done today is say that you are going to put community safety at risk. You are going to put the health and wellbeing of the remaining detainees at Banksia Hill at risk. You do not care about the workers in those facilities.

I think about this issue a bit. We all have tough days, and sometimes we get insulted, and I think about those workers in those facilities and what they have to contend with every day. The Leader of the Liberal Party is saying that somehow it is the workers who are to blame.

Ms L. Mettam: No, I'm saying they don't have the training.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: That is what you are saying. That is what you did. That is what you said. You insulted those who work in the facility.

Several members interjected.

Point of Order

Ms A. SANDERSON: The persistent interjections from the Leader of the Liberal Party are making it impossible for the speaker on her feet. I note that she was listened to in virtual silence.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the Liberal Party, you had your opportunity and made your contribution. The government has the opportunity to respond to the comments you made during your contribution. Some of the Deputy Premier's commentary, as I said to the Leader of the Liberal Party before, will elicit a response from members opposite, so just try and balance that out, please. Carry on.

Debate Resumed

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: When the Leader of the Liberal Party stood, she never mentioned community safety or worker safety and wellbeing. She did not mention the rehabilitation of the other detainees in Banksia Hill. How many—66?

She is jeopardising it all. These complex issues have gone on for many years. I know the Leader of the Opposition made fun of our intensive supervision program. If we look at how to address this issue as a society, it is to be involved early. That is why we invested in the intensive supervision program in Target 120 headed by the former and current Minister for Community Service.

Mr R.S. Love: I wasn't criticising the program.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Yes, you did. You mocked it.

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Maybe it would be different if that program had existed when the Leader of the Opposition was there. If he is going to start laying blame—I really do hate it. These are complex issues. Families are in mourning. I hate these types of debate. I hate the absolute cheapening of it—to come in here and say somehow that that person is to blame after years of what led to this whole situation. It could also be said that the opposition did not fund Target 120, so it is to blame. We could say that, too, because you know what? If there was a proper intervention program earlier when the opposition was in government, which would have been the relevant period for these children, maybe this would not have happened. Maybe if there was proper early intervention, this would not have happened. That is why we believe in early intervention. Do members know what? The results are not today; they are in 10 years' time. Politically, the opposition never did anything on that because it could not show the result on the day. We are investing because of the results of early intervention and Target 120. It is complex. Again, it is about going to families and trying to get them on board. It is cross-government and trying to work with all the relevant agencies. It is something that the Minister for Corrective Services actually committed to in opposition. Target 120 was his policy that we committed to. It was carried forward by the then Minister for Community Services when we won government, and is being expanded and carried forward by the current community services minister. The opposition stood there and laughed at it. Of course, it is not going to show results tomorrow, because it is about trying to work with families earlier, because these are not easy issues to address. Do not come in here and try to create this false argument.

Honestly, I do not believe that anything the Leader of the Liberal Party says is actually sincere. I do not. She will basically say anything. It has been demonstrated that she will say anything. She comes in here with all this fakeness. I cannot handle it because she is not sincere. Like I said, these are complex challenges. We have a new minister dealing with a complex set of environments. The Banksia Hill Detention Centre facility was destroyed in May 2023. That, of course, impacted the ability to manage it. Then, we have unit 18.

As the Minister for Corrective Services just outlined, trying to manage that cohort is difficult. As the minister and I have said, there are a thousand reasons why that is the case and a thousand reasons why those children and young adults are in that situation, but that is the situation we face. Today, the opposition is saying that we should just close unit 18 and send them all back. How long do opposition members think they will stay in a demountable? Members have seen what they can do to showerheads embedded into a wall. Honestly, I was trying to imagine how anyone could physically do that. What does the opposition think they will do to a bunch of demountables? If they are put in a bunch of demountables, they will be on the streets within a day. Then, what if issues happen out there in the community and someone reoffends? What happens? The opposition would run a campaign that the government is soft on crime because it wants to win the politics of crime.

The opposition is having it both ways here. It is running a campaign about the government being soft on crime. Then, if we went and built a demountable—according to the incredible insights of the shadow Minister for Corrective Services, who would build a demountable—and we put some of the most serious offenders into it, what do members think will happen? They will escape. I will tell members that: they will escape. If they do not bash the workforce first, they will escape. Then, what will happen if someone reoffends? What will the opposition say? It will say that we should not have done it. The community would rightly say that we jeopardised its safety. What would someone's daughter or son be saying? They would say, "You jeopardised our safety."

The member stood up today arguing both sides. She basically came in wanting a cheap headline, like she always does. The minister has outlined all the things that are happening, and he is going through a whole reform process. There are the efforts to increase staffing; the review of youth custodial infrastructure, which we will be looking at very soon; and new support services at Banksia Hill, as the minister outlined. There will be more support, counselling —

Mr P. Papalia: Mentors.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: — and mentors. It will involve the Telethon Kids Institute. All these types of initiatives will help to support Banksia Hill.

In the meantime, we have to continue to manage unit 18. As I said, this is not an easy task for a minister. The Minister for Corrective Services has a tough job, as had the former ministers. He is constantly trying to manage a very volatile situation. This is not just one day; every night and every day there are pressures in the system.

I am always happy to have a proper discussion about what we will do in the future, but the opposition comes here with a record of closing Rangeview Remand Centre and, in a sense, creating a system that was not going to work. Opposition members come in here pre-empting reviews and laughing. Like I said, there is no sincerity and no depth; there is just grabbing a headline. It is dial-a-quote. I think that the media could ring up the opposition members and ask, “Will you say this?” and they would say anything. Whatever the media puts to them, they would say. Look, I am sorry, but if the member had seen that performance, I suspect the member would be coming to our side.

This is an awful situation for everyone involved, but the opposition comes in here and says that the solution is to close unit 18 and jeopardise the detainees in Banksia Hill, the community’s safety and the workforce. Those people have to go in there every day; they are walking into a room every day, not knowing what will confront them. Members opposite would not do that job, and I think many people would not do that job. This simplistic, awful, grubby matter of public interest motion is something that I have not seen. Like I have said, we have seen grubby, Minister for Health, but this motion politicises this issue in such a way and ignores all the reforms and all the work undertaken by the minister—with no practical solution. The only proposal the opposition is putting forward is one that will jeopardise the safety of the community, the workforce and the other detainees. We oppose this motion. Again, we understand that the opposition will say and do anything, and will cheapen anything, to try to grab a headline.

Honestly, could you two just sort out who is the Leader of the Opposition because we are getting a bit tired of what is happening on that side?

Division

Question put and a division taken, the Acting Speaker (Ms A.E. Kent) casting her vote with the noes, with the following result —

Ayes (6)

Ms M. Beard	Mr R.S. Love	Mr P.J. Rundle
Dr D.J. Honey	Ms L. Mettam	Ms M.J. Davies (<i>Teller</i>)

Noes (42)

Mr S.N. Aubrey	Mr M. Hughes	Mr K.J.J. Michel	Ms J.J. Shaw
Mr G. Baker	Mr W.J. Johnston	Mr S.A. Millman	Ms R.S. Stephens
Dr A.D. Buti	Mr H.T. Jones	Ms L.A. Munday	Mrs J.M.C. Stojkovski
Mrs R.M.J. Clarke	Mr D.J. Kelly	Mrs L.M. O’Malley	Dr K. Stratton
Ms C.M. Collins	Ms E.J. Kelsbie	Mr P. Papalia	Mr C.J. Tallentire
Ms L. Dalton	Ms A.E. Kent	Mr S.J. Price	Mr P.C. Tinley
Ms D.G. D’Anna	Dr J. Krishnan	Mr D.T. Punch	Ms C.M. Tonkin
Mr M.J. Folkard	Mr P. Lilburne	Mr J.R. Quigley	Mr R.R. Whitby
Ms E.L. Hamilton	Mrs M.R. Marshall	Ms M.M. Quirk	Ms C.M. Rowe (<i>Teller</i>)
Ms M.J. Hammat	Ms S.F. McGurk	Ms R. Saffioti	
Ms J.L. Hanns	Mr D.R. Michael	Ms A. Sanderson	

Question thus negatived.