

Wednesday 30 June 2010 - Estimates Committee B (McKim) - Part 1

DIVISION 6

(Department of Justice)

**Output group 6
Corrective Services**

Mrs TAYLOR - Following on from Mr Wing's questions, I am glad to hear you say you do not think there are any other design problems, but your adviser did say that in response to the incidents that happened in December, for instance, you have had to strengthen doors and hatches and whatever. One would think this is a relatively new prison and should those measures not have been incorporated, one would think, in the structure when it was first built?

Mr McKIM - Yes. Firstly, Mr Williams is the Deputy Secretary of the department, so he is not a political adviser of mine.

Mrs TAYLOR - Sorry.

Mr McKIM - Building a new prison is a big job. Lots of detail has to go into it. Any project of this nature is going to have teething problems. I have indicated that I do regard omission of a fence as a very significant design flaw and it has cost extra money to build that fence now.

I categorise some of the other improvements as part of a continual improvement process in our prisons. Things come to light from time to time. It is very difficult to anticipate every element of human behaviour in advance. As I indicated earlier, everything is not perfect but we are working as hard as we can to make it the best that we possibly can.

Mrs TAYLOR - I understand that this is not your personal responsibility, being a new minister. However, it is the responsibility of the Government and it is the Government I am challenging, not you.

Mr McKIM - Yes, that is fine, Mrs Taylor.

Mrs TAYLOR - With respect, although I agree unforeseen circumstances come up, nevertheless, building a new prison, we were not doing it in an environment where other prisons had not been built in other places in the past. One would think that design elements would be taken into account.

Mr Wing just asked about alternative methods of dealing with prisoners. It was mentioned in the Governor's speech. Taking into account how much it costs to keep a prisoner, there would appear to be a strong case for the greater use of home detention. Can you advise how much use is being made of home detention and whether there is an opportunity for much greater use of that, given the proven use of technology?

CHAIR - You have probably moved into 6.2 in relation to -

Mr McKIM - I am in the hands of the committee here but I would welcome the opportunity to have 6.2 examined because community corrections is an important part of what we do and, in my view, will become more important.

Mrs TAYLOR - Okay.

CHAIR - I would prefer to complete prison services so that then we can get on to the next one. Otherwise we are going to be all over the show and we will be here until tonight.

Mrs TAYLOR - I am sorry, Chair. I have one question on prison services. How many instances were there of drugs being found in prisons in the last year and what actions are being taken to reduce the level of drug use in Tasmanian prisons?

Mr McKIM - Contraband seizures - I do not have the information here on 2009-10 but I am happy to take that on notice - in 2008-09 totalled 56 seizures at the Risdon Prison complex of either alcohol, drugs or drug-taking implements.

Mrs TAYLOR - What actions are you taking to reduce the level?

Mr McKIM - That is a significant reduction on 2007-08, when the total in that category was 79. So that is Risdon. I also have the numbers for Hayes here, which is five in 2008-09, up from three in 2007-08. The most significant action we have taken is building the new fence.

Mrs TAYLOR - Well done.

Mr McKIM - I have just been reminded, and it is quite right, that we have introduced drug detector dogs as well in order to try to minimise the occurrence.

Mrs TAYLOR - Okay, good.

CHAIR - Are the dogs outside the fence or inside?

Laughter.

Mr McKIM - The fence is not built yet but they will be -

Ms HUTTON - We have other fences, Minister; we are not a fence-free environment.