

WA LABOR

# Target 120

**PLAN TO TARGET JUVENILE CRIME**



**A Fresh Approach for WA**

WA Labor Policy | January 2017

## TARGET 120

### WA Labor’s Plan to Target Juvenile Crime

A McGowan Labor Government will introduce Target 120 to focus on the often dysfunctional homes of the State’s worst juvenile offenders to change their behaviour and make communities safer.

The Target 120 response to each home will be co-ordinated by a single, dedicated contact person to ensure efficiency and avoid duplication of effort.

The single point of contact will ensure that there is a more coordinated approach to supporting at risk families who are in contact with multiple government agencies. Enhanced communication across all layers of government is critical to delivering improved outcomes for people with complex issues.

Early intervention with at risk young people will help turn lives around and reduce the rate of offending in our community.

WA Labor will invest \$22 million over four years into the Target 120 initiative. This will bring across-government resources together to support the families of the 120 worst juvenile offenders in the State to help stop them offending before they reach the point of imprisonment. This will also help break the cycle of reoffending.



**STAY INFORMED:**

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[markmcgowan.com.au/Target120](http://markmcgowan.com.au/Target120)

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### **A McGowan Labor Government will:**

- **Introduce Target 120 to focus on the family homes of the worst 120 juvenile criminals in the State.**
- **Apply multi-systemic therapy to address problems in dysfunctional family homes of juvenile offenders.**

Multi-systemic therapy is an intensive family and community based approach that seeks to change the behaviour of adolescents and their families by empowering families to make changes to the parent/child relationships and by addressing problems in the home environment.

## Target 120

A McGowan Labor Government will reintroduce and expand the Family Intensive Team program under the banner of the Target 120 initiative. The new initiative will incorporate lessons learned from the UK Troubled Families Program. Apart from better resourcing and more focussed targeting, the new initiative will introduce a compulsory participation approach for the first time. The worst 120 juvenile offenders and their families will be compelled to participate in the program through use of Parental Responsibility legislation.<sup>1</sup>

The program will focus solely on the worst juvenile offenders who are about to embark upon, or have already entered a criminal pathway. Success of the program can be easily gauged through measuring any change in rates of recidivism.

The potential benefits of the program are enormous:

- Each child incarcerated in a juvenile detention facility costs between \$600 and \$700 per day or the equivalent of between \$219,000 and \$255,500 per year.<sup>2</sup>
- Of those juvenile offenders who are incarcerated, about half return to custody within two years of release.<sup>3</sup>
- One third of all juveniles who enter detention end up reoffending as adults in such a way as they enter the adult prison system.<sup>4</sup>
- The disproportionately high rate of Aboriginal juvenile incarceration means that many offenders who graduate to the adult prison system are Aboriginal (around 39 per cent of adult male prisoners are Aboriginal).<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Parental Support and Responsibility Bill 2005 was introduced by the previous Labor government but never used by the Barnett government.

<sup>2</sup> Op cit Martin

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Statistics provided in response to Legislative Assembly Opposition questions on notice June 2009

<sup>5</sup> Op cit questions on notice

- Once in the adult prison system, 70 per cent of Aboriginal prisoners re-offend after release in such a manner as to receive another custodial sentence within 2 years.<sup>6</sup>

## Target 120 in Practice

Only a very small number of young Western Australians are responsible for most of the juvenile crime committed in the State. The worst 120 juvenile criminals average 25 or more formal contacts with the Police during their adolescence.<sup>7</sup> The costs to the State of the poor behaviour by the worst juvenile offenders has been put at an estimated \$1 million per child as they move through the ages 10 to 17 years.<sup>8</sup>

In 2014, the Western Australian Police Commissioner gave his own estimate of the scale of cost associated with the small cohort of serious juvenile offenders and their families, when he said; "If left unresolved it is estimated that one of these families will cost the WA taxpayer \$178 million over a 20 year period in police and justice services alone".<sup>9</sup>

This observation expands the estimate of cost beyond the costs directly attributable to the juvenile offender and speculates as to the wider costs associated with dealing with the offender's family.

The 120 most prolific repeat offenders represent only around .05 per cent of young Western Australians between the age of 10 and 17.<sup>10</sup> This extraordinary concentration of responsibility for youth crime in such a tiny proportion of the population actually offers a real opportunity. Bringing across-government attention to such a small group in a focussed manner is achievable.

<sup>6</sup> Op cit questions on notice

<sup>7</sup> Colin Murphy 18 June 2008, The Juvenile Justice System: Dealing with Young People under the Young Offenders Act 1994, Auditor General for Western Australia, Perth.

<sup>8</sup> Op cit Murphy

<sup>9</sup> Karl O'Callaghan, mid 2014, What really matters, Police Commissioner's blog, Western Australian Police website, Perth.

<sup>10</sup> Number of Western Australian children between ages 10 and 17 census date 2006 was 224,865

## Multi-systemic Therapy

The previous Labor State Government introduced the Family Intensive Team (initially called the Intensive Supervision Program) in 2004. The program used Multi-systemic Therapy (MST) to work on fixing the dysfunctional family life of prolific juvenile offenders.

MST is an intensive family and community-based approach that seeks to change the behaviour of adolescents and their families, by empowering families to make changes to parent/child relationships, and in addressing problems in home environments.<sup>1</sup>

In effect, the program brought multiple government agencies and other resources together to provide 24 hour, 7 day a week support at what is so often the source of the problem behaviour, the offender's home.

An independent review of the program in June 2009 stated 'qualitative information, the literature and MST Department of Health findings all point to it being an effective program'.<sup>2</sup> Despite the review's findings, the Barnett Government cancelled the Family Intensive Team in 2010 claiming it had not worked. This claim was never substantiated by evidence.

In 2011 the Conservative UK Government implemented the Troubled Families Program to address the 120,000 most troubled families in the UK that it was estimated cost the taxpayer £9 Billion per year. As of August 2014 it has been estimated that up to 53,000 had had their lives turned around or significantly improved in key areas such as school attendance, participation in the workplace and antisocial behaviour.

Key to the Troubled Families Program is that each family has a main point of contact, one person – a family worker who they get to know, who helps coordinate support services from across agencies and who they contact for advice and assistance.

WA Labor's Target 120 initiative will bring across-government resources to bear on the families of the 120 worst juvenile offenders in the State to stop them offending before they reach the point of imprisonment.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> From Department of Corrective Services Request for Quote and reported in Cant et al June 2009, Review of the Intensive Supervision Program, Social Systems Evaluation  
<sup>2</sup> Ibid Cant et al

<sup>3</sup> The government projects Criminal Law Amendment (Home Burglary and Other Offences) Bill 2014 will result in an additional 60 juveniles in detention over first three years from implementation

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