

## **2.4 Deputy F.J. Hill of St. Martin of the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture regarding the establishment of a Board of Visitors for Greenfields:**

The Prison (Board of Visitors) (Jersey) Regulations 1957 confirms the right on the board members to make frequent visits to the prison in order to promote the efficiency of the prison and bring any abuses, which comes to its knowledge in connection with the prison, to the attention of the Minister for Home Affairs. Will the Minister inform Members if there is a similar board in respect of visits to Greenfields?

### **Senator M.E. Vibert (The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture):**

Yes, a similar body exists in relation to the Greenfields Centre and this is known as the Board of Independent Visitors. This was established by the former Education, Sport and Culture Committee under my presidency following approval by the States of the Education (Revocation of Provided School) Jersey Regulations 2004 which came into effect in November 2004. The board meets regularly on site in order to monitor the operation of the facility. In addition, members of the board make unscheduled visits to the centre and report back to the rest of the board on their findings.

#### **2.4.1 The Deputy of St. Martin:**

I welcome the Minister's response, but could I ask are reports ever made available to the public of these visits?

### **Senator M.E. Vibert:**

No, Sir, because the reports could involve confidential information regarding inmates and staff they are not made public, but obviously the Children's Executive and myself have access to them.

#### **2.4.2 Senator S. Syvret:**

Could the Minister explain what expertise and training members of this board have and whether also they are allowed private audiences, private conversations, with inmates without any of the management being present?

### **Senator M.E. Vibert:**

The Board of Independent Visitors is what it says, independent visitors. They are given a grounding and explained what the Greenfields Centre is all about and the board, as I mentioned, make unscheduled visits. In fact, they made 11 unscheduled visits in 2007 to the centre in which they have free rein to go about the centre and both talk to anyone who is in residence there and the staff, and they have this facility on certain occasions. For safety reasons it may be suggested to them that they do not talk to a resident on their own but generally they have free rein, as they are independent visitors, to look round the facility, to ask questions, and report back to the full board and through the full board the Children's Executive and the Minister.

#### **2.4.3 Senator S. Syvret:**

Does the Minister not accept then, from what he said, that the system is seriously defective? Having a grounding in something, i.e. being told what goes on by a few of the officers is not the same as being specifically trained and qualified in these matters and if the management are able to determine which inmate a visitor may or may not speak to privately then, I am afraid, that defeats the entire object of the inmate being able to express freely any concerns they may have to this independent visitor. Will the Minister undertake to re-examine this system?

### **Senator M.E. Vibert:**

I am quite happy to re-examine the system but I do not accept the criticisms of Senator Syvret. These are independent visitors. They are not professionals in the field. We employ professionals in the field and that is where the professionalism come in, but these are independent visitors and I mentioned advice being given to them which is, in my view, necessary and sensible advice, but I

am quite willing to examine it again to see if any improvements can be made and I await, of course, the *Williamson Report*, in case it suggests any improvements.

#### **2.4.4 Deputy J.G. Reed of St. Ouen:**

Could I ask the Minister to confirm how long the board has been in existence?

#### **Senator M.E. Vibert:**

I did say in my answer how long the board had been in existence. It was set up and came into effect in November 2004.

#### **2.4.5 Deputy S.C. Ferguson:**

I really do not understand this business about not publishing a report. Surely the Minister could redact those parts of the report that might be used to identify somebody? I mean, even school inspection reports in the U.K. are freely available on the website so why should not a report, as I say, without the details of individuals not be available to this House?

#### **Senator M.E. Vibert:**

I am quite willing to look into that. I am not aware that prison boards' reports are for general publication. Perhaps I am mistaken. But certainly I have some minutes in front of me and with taking out all the names concerned and the things I do not think it would be of much value, to be totally blunt, to States Members, but I am prepared to look at it again.

#### **2.4.6 The Deputy of St. Martin:**

Could I reassure the Minister that the Prison (Board of Visitors) (Jersey) Regulations make it mandatory that an annual report is produced and can I give an assurance that they have been produced although albeit we are waiting for one for the last year, but I am sure that will be coming on very soon. Could I press the Minister to ensure that such reports are made public?

#### **Senator M.E. Vibert:**

That is totally different and I am quite happy to look again and produce an annual report. But I thought what was being asked was a minutes of the 6 actual meetings the Board of Visitors have every year which I think would be something a step too far, in a way, and not very valuable to the States. But, yes, I will look at that. Like I said, I am waiting for the recommendations of the *Williamson Report* but I will certainly put that into the equation, and I see no reason whatsoever why an annual report should not be produced.

#### **2.4.7 Senator S. Syvret:**

Could the Minister explain to the Assembly what the predecessor organisation of this board was when the institution was Les Chênes, what regulations it was governed by and whether he considered it appropriate that there was a man who is a member of that board who engaged in the cover-up of child abuse at Victoria College?

#### **Senator M.E. Vibert:**

I have not got the details of the predecessor regime in front of me and given Senator Syvret's interest in this matter I would not like to say anything without having thoroughly checked it beforehand, so I can come back to him on that. But there was a predecessor body and I, of course, disassociate myself from any of the other extraneous comments he made in his question.