



Speech by

**Hon. J. ELDER**

**MEMBER FOR CAPALABA**

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Hansard 17 November 1998

### **MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

#### **Operation Rein; Prison Escape Bids**

**Hon. J. P. ELDER** (Capalaba—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade) (9.46 a.m.), by leave: This morning's Courier-Mail has a story about Operation Rein, a joint police and corrective services operation which has led to 13 people being charged with 35 drug-related offences. A key aspect of this operation was investigation by police of prisoner bank accounts and the transfer of \$40,000 for drug sales. Police were able to pinpoint the alleged organisers or key players in this particular drug ring and not just the couriers who are normally the only ones caught. The successful operation also foiled a potential escape bid at Borallon Correctional Centre, involving firearms being smuggled into the prison. The other alarming factor was that it is alleged that this escape plan involved prison officers being taken hostage and killed. Police and correctional officers and management at Borallon are to be congratulated on their success in completing this operation without a hitch.

This latest success comes hot on the heels of the other foiled escape bid out at Woodford Correctional Centre. This bid was centred around a very detailed map of the prison, and prison authorities acted quickly and effectively to nullify any security risks. What has not been reported to date is a third foiled escape bid, this time at Sir David Longland Correctional Centre at Wacol. It involved two inmates faking illnesses in order to be taken to the secure unit at the Princess Alexandra Hospital. At the hospital, the inmates had planned to take a nurse hostage and make their escape. However, their plans came unstuck when diligent prison officers carried out a strip search of the inmates and discovered a concealed razor blade and a sharpened toothbrush. The inmates had planned to use the razor blade and toothbrush to take the nurse hostage. The toothbrush was found in a compartment inside one of the inmates' shoes, and the razor blade was concealed on the other inmate's body.

This incident and the foiled escape bids at Woodford and Borallon are positive proof that the procedures and intelligence gathering networks are working very well in our prisons. Considering that there were major break-outs at Sir David Longland and Borallon late last year, these foiled escapes show a major turnaround in the operations of our prisons. It is amazing what can be achieved if you let police and prison officers get on with their jobs instead of interfering in the day-to-day operations, which was the specialty of the previous Minister, Russell Cooper. Yes, Mr Speaker, the previous Borbidge Government was letting prisoners like Brendon Abbott out while the Beattie Government, through the great work of prison officers, has managed to foil three escapes, and we are only four and half months into our term.

Last week, Corrective Services Minister, Tom Barton, said that there was more good news to come out of the prisons portfolio. This is part of it. But, without trying to sound like the Demtel man, there's more! Doesn't the member for Crows Nest just love it! The recently implemented General Managers Task Force has achieved some amazing results. There have been more than 20 significant drug busts in Queensland's prisons since the task force was established in July—something which is unprecedented in Queensland's prison history. There has been another spin-off from this drug crackdown: there has been a significant drop in positive drug tests. At Sir David Longland, the number of positive drug tests from random urine analysis on prisoners has fallen from 6.9% in August this year to just 2% last month. That is a great result and just a start in our crackdown on drugs in prisons.

There will be more good news about these results in weeks to come. The bottom line of these successful operations is that they send a clear signal to anyone smuggling or thinking about smuggling drugs into our prisons. The warning is: sooner or later you will get caught.

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