



Speech by

**Hon. ANNA BLIGH**

**MEMBER FOR SOUTH BRISBANE**

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Hansard 27 April 1999

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

**Youth Detention**

**Hon. A. M. BLIGH** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care and Minister for Disability Services) (9.55 a.m.), by leave: I am proud today to announce that the Beattie Government's 10-year plan to build a safer and more secure youth detention system is well under way. Through our \$63m rebuilding program we will ensure that the community is safer and that young people in detention are both secure and safe in our care.

I am pleased to inform the House that phase one of a \$4m upgrade of the John Oxley centre began last week. Under the plan, airconditioning will be installed so that window grills and other likely hanging points can be removed to make the accommodation units safer. Also, the security and surveillance system will be upgraded as part of phase one. The need to remove risk points was identified by the royal commission into Aboriginal deaths in custody nearly 10 years ago. The changes being made under our rebuilding program will deliver compliance at last with the recommendations of the royal commission.

Stage 1 at John Oxley also includes new floor coverings, repainting, and new fittings and furniture in the bedrooms and shared areas which combine the provision of improved living standards and the minimisation of suicide risks for residents. Stage 1 is expected to be completed mid year. Stage 2 of the project will focus on enhancements for its new role as a remand and reception centre under the infrastructure plan. The project includes remodelling the admission, medical, educational, recreational and administration areas. Not only will safety at the centre be upgraded under this plan; the working conditions for staff will also improve. I take this opportunity to thank all the dedicated people in our youth detention system, who often work in very difficult, uncomfortable and unsuitable environments.

It would appear that the previous coalition Government did not share the same sense of urgency about the safety of young Queenslanders in detention, nor did it care about the working conditions of staff in these facilities. The previous Government simply failed to deliver a new youth detention system. It inherited \$28m in 1996 from the Goss Government's infrastructure plan and it spent none of it. The money simply sat in its coffers for three Budgets in a row.

In contrast, the Beattie Government has moved swiftly to rebuild Queensland's outdated youth detention centres. Within eight weeks of the responsibility for youth detention being returned to my department late last year, Cabinet approved the \$63m 10-year infrastructure plan to rebuild our youth system. That plan involves the opening of a new purpose-built facility by the end of 2000 and the long overdue closure of the Sir Leslie Wilson Youth Detention Centre immediately after. The plan will also see the rebuilding of the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre in Townsville and the upgrade of the John Oxley Youth Detention Centre.

The Beattie Government is committed to securing the care of young people in detention. This youth detention centre infrastructure plan will provide a safer community, create better outcomes for young offenders and create around 400 jobs, more than 80 of which will be in north Queensland. I look forward to reporting to Parliament in the future as we continue to improve Queensland's youth detention system.

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