



Speech by

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PRISONER REHABILITATION

Mrs ATTWOOD (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (10.20 a.m.): Part of my role as member for the people of Mount Ommaney is to put their views to authorities about Government institutions. As a member of the community advisory committees for the Sir David Longland prison and Moreton A and Moreton B prisons in the Wacol area, I can represent the views of my community about the prison system and report back to them about activities that can assist to make those prisons places of rehabilitation.

It is not sufficient to lock someone up and throw away the key. Most prisoners will be released out into the community after a short or long stay in prison. In fact, some prisoners will get so accustomed to the routines in the confined space of a prison after many years that they simply cannot adjust to the outside world and will reoffend to get back in. Yes, prisons are there to punish and to keep offenders from doing further harm to the community, but when their sentence is finished, those people must be prepared to go back into the community with the view not to reoffend. Their lives must be useful and they must not be a harm to the public. The only way to do this is to provide prisoners with rehabilitation whilst they are incarcerated.

Meaningful and beneficial programs such as self-development, offender prevention, inside employment and skills courses are an essential part of prisoner rehabilitation. These programs achieve a number of outcomes: they keep prisoners occupied; they provide useful skills for their release; they diminish the need to re-offend; they build self-esteem; and they provide for non-reliance on crime to survive. These programs also provide valuable social skills and living skills. Without these programs, the prisoner comes out unchanged and slips back into a life of crime using his increased knowledge and networks from prison. It costs the prisons less to run these programs than to house a prisoner for another 12 months. Minor offenders should be kept out of jail and given a community service to perform. We must free up the prison system for the bad criminals—the ones who are capable of causing the most harm in our society.
