



Speech by

Mr M. HORAN

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA SOUTH

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PRISON ESCAPE

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (10.22 a.m.): The list of blunders under the Beattie Labor Government continues to grow at an alarming rate. Last weekend, we saw the farcical situation of two prisoners in Townsville, one who had been sent to prison for murder and one who had been sent to prison for attempted murder, being allowed to drive a Landcruiser out of the prison farm at 6.30 p.m. on Saturday night, ostensibly to go to the rubbish dump. The prisoners were not only driving a Landcruiser but also it had two long-range fuel tanks full of fuel.

What has the security of our prison system come to in this State under the Beattie Labor Government? When the Minister was in Opposition, he was known as the resignation king. He called for the resignation of the former Government's Minister for Corrective Services after the Abbott escape, when people used machine guns to free the prisoners. However, these prisoners did not need machine guns; they simply drove out in a Landcruiser full of fuel. The only thing that these prisoners did not have were the fishing rods and the picnic hamper.

However, this situation is worse than it seems. Why would a Government put such a temptation in the hands of prisoners regarded by police as dangerous? Obviously, the prison has only a skeleton staff, because these prisoners were not only allowed out to go to the dump at 6.30 at night—and I do not know of any rubbish dump in Queensland that is open on a Saturday night; perhaps it is another word for the pub—but also the prison authorities did not know until about 9.30 at night that these prisoners had not returned. So the very basic system of having someone knowing who goes in and who goes out and when they go in and out is absolutely not applied at this particular institution.

The very least that the Minister can do for the people of Queensland is give us an explanation in the Parliament this week as to how this escape happened, why it happened, and what he is going to do to stop future escapes. When prison security in this State is reduced to the standard at which people can escape in a Landcruiser on a Saturday night, that is an indication of what is happening in our prisons.

Time expired.
