



Speech by

Hon. TOM BARTON

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

Hansard 15 September 1999

BURNETT REGION

Hon. T. A. BARTON (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (6.41 p.m.): I rise to oppose the motion and to support the Premier's amendment. I wish to address the rewriting of history by members opposite, who were proposing a 600-bed correctional facility for which there were 25 applications. They short-listed four locations at a Cabinet meeting, which the Minister for Mines and Energy referred to as a political stunt, in the lead-up to the last election when they were trying to save their hide in the electorate of Barambah. Interestingly, they short-listed Maryborough, Inglewood, Roma, Tarong, Nanango and Rosalie, but they had not mentioned Yarraman. At that point they were saying, "We'll build three 200-bed prisons." We also need to acknowledge that that was not the then Queensland Corrective Services Commission's position. It was opposed to the concept of three 200-bed prisons. All of the briefing material that was given when I became the Minister indicated not only that but also that it would be virtually twice the price, both in terms of construction and recurrent costs for the operations at those prisons. That was the reality. They staged a straight-out political stunt that did not reflect the position of the Queensland Corrective Services Commission.

I picked up the process that had been commenced by my predecessor and again inspected all of those sites. It became apparent that they had got their planning wrong and that they needed 900. We had another look at it, and the frontrunners at that time were Maryborough, Woodford and Yarraman. Yarraman is a good site, but it is not the best one. The reality was that the most effective way to do what was needed was to put 400 cells onto Woodford, which is what is happening. Woodford speaks for itself. It is a good site and one that has excellent support from that community, and we found that we would be able to put in place those cells in a cost-effective and speedy fashion.

Maryborough was another of the coalition's short-listed sites. Maryborough pipped Yarraman essentially because it had better transport, labour availability and better support from the council, which was also providing financial and infrastructure support. There was also very strong public support. Importantly, it had very good support from its local member, who at that time was a One Nation member. Importantly, it is in the Burnett region, which is also doing it tough in terms of jobs. Every time I see Woodford it is pretty clear to me that it is a country town and is not that which is trying to be portrayed in this place. In response to the comments made tonight by the member for Barambah, I point out that Yarraman received absolutely no support at all from its local member.

Mrs PRATT: I rise to a point of order. I take offence at those remarks, because I was approached by—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Reeves): Order! This is not a debate.

Mrs PRATT: I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! This is not a debate.

Mrs PRATT: Mr Deputy Speaker, I did ask for the remarks to be withdrawn.

Mr BARTON: I will withdraw the remark. Let us have a look at the South Burnett Times of 19 June 1998, which stated—

"Probable member for Barambah Mrs Pratt said she was personally not in favour of a prison being established at Tarong.

She said it was One Nation's policy to have a local mini-referendum to decide whether a prison should be located in the district."

The other reality is that I did not receive—

Mrs PRATT: I rise to a point of order. I did in fact say that I would support the people, although I was opposed—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order.

Mr BARTON: As Minister, I did not receive one single letter, phone call or fax from the honourable member—not one. However, what I did receive from the member for Maryborough was constant support. Once the decision was made in relation to Maryborough, we saw the spectacle of the member for Barambah saying that she was opposed to Maryborough. Also, on 30 March she criticised the decision in respect of Woodford as being crazy. The member for Barambah does not seem to understand that Woodford and the Woodford prison site is actually within the boundaries of the redrawn electorate of Barambah. She is criticising a decision that is good for her electorate.

Time expired.
