



Speech by

Mrs D. PRATT

MEMBER FOR BARAMBAH

Hansard 2 August 2001

SIR DAVID LONGLAND CORRECTIONAL CENTRE

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (5.30 p.m.): I am extremely concerned that the management at Sir David Longland Correctional Centre have taken away sleep-over facilities that had been available to officers who lived a long way from the centre. A memo to various staff from Mr Michael Costa states that this new policy is government policy. In this era where work is not prolific and jobs are hard to find, people are being forced to travel long distances from home in order to be employed. In fact, the person who brought this matter to my attention lives in excess of 130 kilometres—on a one-way trip—from Sir David Longland.

Prison officers work 12-hour shifts. Upon finishing his 12-hour stint late at night, my constituent used to be able to sleep over in a facility at the centre that was made available solely for this purpose. This meant that he did not have to get into his car and drive those kilometres home but could return home somewhat refreshed in the morning.

The reason given for this change of events is that, if a person was hurt off duty whilst sleeping over, the centre could be liable for damages. Sadly, while compensation is seen as an alternative source of income, this may well be true. However, there must be some other arrangements whereby people who travel long distances to a stress intensive job, such as a correctional officer, can sleep the rest of the night in a convenient location before attempting the drive home. Our TVs are currently saturated with advertisements warning against the dangers of driving whilst tired. Does anyone think a correctional officer would not be extremely tired after a 12-hour shift?

I believe there is a staff amenity building outside the perimeter of the Sir David Longland Correctional Centre that could be used to allow long distance employees to rest. I believe also that it is going to be turned into an emergency command station for the police and fire brigade, presumably in the event of trouble. If this is so, how often will it be used in this manner? Why can't officers use this facility to sleep over? They would be outside the facility and not in any danger from the centre.

This situation must be corrected. If it is not, it will be considered by the majority of my electorate and me to be severe discrimination against people who have to travel long distances from country areas to other areas to get jobs. It will discriminate unfavourably against people who want to work and who are willing to travel considerable distances. It will create financial hardship and exacerbate the possibility of having an accident while driving home in the middle of the night. It will cause undue hardship to those who have made financial commitments and are not able to simply up stumps and move closer to the workplace. It will open the government to possible litigation in the future. Is this government policy as stated by Mr Costa? I urge the Minister for Police and Corrective Services to remedy this situation immediately, if not sooner. It just cannot be allowed to continue.
