



Speech by

Hon. JUDY SPENCE

MEMBER FOR MOUNT GRAVATT

Hansard 7 November 2001

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Cleveland Youth Detention Centre

Hon. J. C. SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Families and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Minister for Disability Services) (10.06 a.m.), by leave: As many members would be aware, one of the key recommendations of the Forde inquiry was to implement a major reform of Queensland's youth detention services. We set about completing this with a \$63 million 10-year Youth Detention Infrastructure Program for Queensland. This plan was developed in response to the need to balance the community's desire for protection with the rehabilitation of young offenders.

One centre identified by the Forde inquiry was Townsville's Cleveland Youth Detention Centre. Later this month I will have the privilege of officially opening the refurbished centre, completed at a cost of \$19.3 million. This centre was originally opened in 1980 as a short-term remand and holding facility for a maximum of 16 young people from the north Queensland region. However, since that time very few purpose-built improvements have been added to the centre, other than two temporary demountable accommodation units and two demountable program and teaching areas.

The rebuilding program was completed in September this year and included the construction of a range of new buildings including: a 22-bed male accommodation block, visitors building, admissions/release and medical facility, and an administration building; three general learning classrooms, a manual arts building and construction court; and an administration building for Education Queensland. There has been major refurbishment of existing buildings to provide for a new kitchen, laundry, general store and office accommodation for the multi-disciplinary team. Recreation and sporting facilities have also been provided, which include a sports oval, basketball court and outdoor learning spaces.

These enhancements enable the centre to respond to the recommendations of the Forde inquiry by providing improved accommodation that is comfortable yet safe and secure, and provides the spaces and facilities to operate educational, vocational and therapeutic programs, which were areas identified at the time as being deficient. The learning areas and medical facilities have been designed to allow for the increased services and programs now being provided by Education Queensland and Queensland Health.

The completion of the Cleveland centre and the new Brisbane Detention Centre—opened earlier this year by the Premier and I—replace outdated and outmoded facilities and are a clear demonstration of this government's commitment to tackling youth crime and the issues facing young people today. Whilst significant resources have been provided to establish and operate these centres, it is just one part of the government's overall strategy. A detention order remains the option of last resort and effective programs in crime prevention, early intervention and programs for young people on non-custodial orders continue to be critical to this overall strategy.

In the long term, a successful policy of early intervention is more effective in keeping our young people out of the judicial system. That is a better alternative for all the community and it is one that we will continue to pursue. We need to continue the fight against the causes of crime if we are to build safer communities. The emphasis at detention centres such as these is on providing educational facilities, training and appropriate counselling. Centres such as Cleveland play an important role in both deterrence and rehabilitation of our young offenders. There should be no doubt that this government is committed to rebuilding our youth justice system and our child protection system through both resourcing and providing the best legislative framework.