



Speech by

**Hon. T. McGRADY**

**MEMBER FOR MOUNT ISA**

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Hansard 13 September 2001

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

**Drugs; Capricornia Correctional Centre**

**Hon. T. McGRADY** (Mount Isa—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister Assisting the Premier on the Carpentaria Minerals Province) (10.00 a.m.), by leave: Today I would like to talk about two important advances on either side of the Police and Corrective Services portfolio. Both elements are equally important—not only must we have law enforcement to deter and detect those who would break society's rules, but we also need places to incarcerate and penalise people for the good of the community and the offenders themselves.

Firstly, from a policing perspective, I am pleased to report to the House today on the recent successes of police in cracking down on Queensland's trade in illicit drugs. As members may be aware, drug use is a complex issue and one which the Beattie government is certainly addressing. We take a balanced approach which includes proactive intervention to help people off drugs, utilising initiatives such as the drug court trials and the Police Drug Diversion Program, and tough enforcement to combat drug trafficking. In relation to this latter point, I can inform the House that during the month of August alone, the State Drug Investigation Group has seized more than \$103,000 worth of illicit drugs as part of the police's ongoing efforts to crack down on the state's illicit drug market.

The Queensland Police Service has had three successful drug busts in recent weeks. During the last 12 months, the State Drug Investigation Group has conducted 25 major drug operations across Queensland. This has resulted in 345 people being arrested on a total of 1,736 charges. In addition to this, since the beginning of the year, 73 clandestine drug laboratories have been located and dismantled in our state.

In recent weeks, an operation in the Bundaberg area netted heroin worth nearly \$9,000 and police seized computers, electrical equipment and \$57,000 in cash connected to this drug ring. During an operation focusing on a drug group in Brisbane and the Sunshine Coast, 14 people were arrested, police seized 500 ecstasy tablets and property to the value of nearly \$120,000. Those efforts have helped to hinder the production and sale of drugs throughout the state.

The \$103,000 figure I mentioned earlier does not include drug seizures and arrests made on a daily basis by general duties officers and detectives working in regional and metropolitan areas. The government's commitment of more funding for sniffer dogs, tactical crime squads and increased illicit market scams will all help progress this enforcement.

The field of Corrective Services is a fairly contentious one. Usually the bad news associated with it gets extensive media coverage and our successes largely go unheralded. However, today is a time to talk about a positive development. Yesterday, the Capricornia Correctional Centre in Rockhampton was officially opened by my colleague the member for Rockhampton. Jim Pearce accompanied him on that occasion. Obviously, the Beattie Labor government would rather spend this money on health or education, but the simple fact is that we do not live in a perfect society and as long as we have those who break the law, we need secure facilities to house them and keep the community safe.

The new 400-bed prison is a state-of-the-art prison just under \$89.5 million and replaces the Rockhampton Correctional Centre, which was built in 1969. The new prison has been designed to provide a safe and secure environment for staff working in the correctional centre and the prisoners themselves.

The centre has actually been very good news for the Rockhampton community, because its opening means an extra 88 new jobs, many of which will go to Rockhampton residents, or provide new residents for the city. The city's economy has benefited greatly during the construction phase of this prison. Twenty-five local companies were engaged during the project's construction phase, which injected an estimated \$21 million into the Rockhampton economy. I am sure that all honourable members would agree that that is a substantial boon.

The new centre forms part of Queensland's active capital works program within the corrections portfolio in recent years to replace ageing prisons with modern facilities. This investment will pay off as these prisons will stand the test of time and create a safe and secure environment for both prisoners and custodial staff. The new prison will also have a large range of prison industries, which will allow offenders to gain skills which may lead them to employment on their release.

While our government's investment in this project has been substantial, it has been necessary. I believe that this new facility will stand us in good stead during the modern era of corrective services.

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