



Speech by

Hon. T. McGRADY

MEMBER FOR MOUNT ISA

Hansard 4 December 2001

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Department of Corrective Services; Ethical Standards Unit

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister Assisting the Premier on the Carpentaria Minerals Province) (9.52 a.m.), by leave: I would like to inform the House about an important new development within Corrective Services. Most organisations require some form of watchdog mechanism to ensure that the standards and ethics required for this body are upheld. Corrective Services is no different. Given the role of this department, it may be even more important that goals, ethics and high standards are adhered to and upheld.

The housing of the state's offenders is an important task which keeps the Queensland community safe. But with this task must come a high degree of responsibility. There must be checks and balances to ensure that a high standard of behaviour and integrity is maintained. The Beattie Labor government recognises the importance of this and, to this end, has endorsed the establishment of an ethical standards unit for the Department of Corrective Services. It will be the first time that the Department of Corrective Services will have a specialised ethical standards unit to monitor and maintain accountability within the department. It is also consistent with my desire to have a more transparent corrections system in this state.

From time to time, the opposition likes to paint the Beattie government as being arrogant. But my announcement today is proof that the government is committed to only the highest levels of ethics and professionalism. We are an open and accountable government, and we are committed to putting in place the necessary checks and balances to ensure that the government continues to deliver professional services to the community. This move follows a report into the Department of Corrective Services' internal audit unit that recommended the creation of an ethical standards unit. This recommendation was based on an identified need for the Department of Corrective Services to develop a centralised strategy for its investigation functions.

In addition to this, the unit will fulfil several goals. It will undertake analysis of information garnered from investigations; undertake an analysis of risks identified through investigation activities; and further develop a culture of integrity through proactive education. The ethical standards unit will aim to further develop ethical standards and education programs; develop and manage a panel of providers for external investigations and inspectorial activities; and oversee the departmental code of conduct, Public Sector Ethics Act and Whistleblowers Protection Act obligations.

Mr Chris Watters recently began working for the department as the new director of the ethical standards unit. Mr Watters is well qualified for this position, with an extensive background in both the legal and policing professions. As the ethical standards unit director, Mr Watters will work in conjunction with other areas like human resources and the Corrective Services investigation unit and take on the primary liaison role with the CJC. The move to establish this unit is an impressive example of the Beattie government striving to maintain best practice in the field of corrective services.
