



Speech by

Andrew Powell

MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

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WOODFORD CORRECTIONAL CENTRE

Mr POWELL (Glass House—LNP) (10.06 pm): Last week I had an unforgettable experience in touring the Woodford Correctional Centre. To call the tour confronting would be an understatement. It left me mentally exhausted. So from the outset let me applaud the management and staff of the Woodford Correctional Centre for the outstanding job they do day in and day out. How they achieve it without it impacting on their personal lives I simply cannot comprehend. It is an intense and constant job, and I think it is fair to say that their duty goes largely unacknowledged and unrewarded. So to Mr Scott Collins, the general manager, his management team and each and every individual correctional officer, program officer, dog handler or health worker: you have my utmost respect and gratitude. Thank you for the work you do.

Mr Collins and Commissioner Kelvin Anderson arranged an exhaustive tour. As they said, they did not shield me from any element of the operation of the centre. The tour took in the new but relatively vacant secure MCR 2 block. I got to see firsthand the cells and exercise yards of some of our most dangerous prisoners and have begun to appreciate the loss of privacy and day-to-day variation that confronts them when they are sentenced to time in a correctional facility. I was shown the various industry workshops where prisoners who arrive, often with little to no educational or training attainment, are taught trades and skills. These workshops have real potential, particularly when it comes to giving prisoners a future, so I look forward to working with industries manager Brian Martens and the department to identify suitable industries for operation in the centre.

The tour also included the detention centre; the safety unit, where prisoners at particular risk of self-harming are sent for treatment and stabilisation; the programs area, where they are taught literacy, numeracy and other life skills; and the residential facility, where some six to eight correctional officers oversee more than 200 prisoners in a campus type layout. It included the intelligence unit, the master control area and the Dog Squad. As I said, nothing was held back. Thanks to Mr Kidd for keeping a watchful eye over me throughout.

The tour has filled me with pride that I can serve these servants of the people and I look forward to representing the staff of Woodford Correctional Centre in every possible way as their state member in parliament. Unfortunately, though, the tour has left me with several questions, not least of which is why this facility is only half full. Why is the department building more facilities and expanding others when this modern, fully equipped and fully staffed centre is sitting underutilised? Most importantly, what will be the impact on staff? Yes, voluntary transfers to other centres throughout the state are on offer, but what about those who cannot or will not move? What about the casual staff? I am not surprised that these questions are also giving the centre's general manager sleepless nights. I believe that he is genuine in his concern for his team. I only hope that his superiors, and ultimately this government, share his concern.