




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR EVERTON

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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Correctional Centres, Overcrowding

 **Mr MANDER** (Everton—LNP) (12.13 pm): The news overnight of another prison riot where five prison guards were assaulted by prisoners at the Brisbane Correctional Centre is further proof that our prisons are out of control. Running on an average capacity rate now of 112 per cent, the prisons in our state are like sardine cans. Our prisons are turning into fight clubs and unfortunately the victims are not only other prisoners being assaulted but also our hardworking prison staff.

The events of last night are now becoming a regular occurrence right across the state. Last week in the electorate of the Minister for Corrective Services we saw stories emerge from the Capricornia Correctional Centre of prisoners fearing greater risk of sexual assault due to overcrowding. This prison is operating at 129 per cent capacity. The prisoners even wrote to the minister stating—

Overcrowding in Capricornia Corrections is causing friction amongst prisoners, hostility between officers and prisoners, and sexual assaults.

A government member interjected.

Mr MANDER: I will take that interjection. It is not something that we should be laughing about at all. Queensland Law Society president Bill Potts said you would not keep a dog in the same situation. It was revealed in August that a former officer at the Maryborough prison had raised concerns about overcrowding and that this overcrowding could be putting at risk the safety of guards and inmates. Ian Barber worked in Corrective Services for 27 years before joining the Together union as the Maryborough prison's project manager. Mr Barber said overcrowding at the facility was diminishing the ability of officers to prevent violent conflicts. Then we had the following reports from the Brisbane women's prison where there are 108 more inmates than it was built for. Women are forced to double up and sleep with their head next to the toilet as they sleep on the floor on a mattress. The Ombudsman said—

In my view, QCS has failed to provide adequate living conditions for prisoners at BWCC.

The report also says that assaults in our women's prison have increased, as have the cases of self-harm. What did we hear from the Minister for Corrective Services when he heard these reports? He said he was comfortable with the situation at the Brisbane Women's Correctional Centre, even though some of these women lying on the floor were pregnant. The minister was quickly slapped down by the Premier a couple of days later. We have heard nothing else from the Minister for Corrective Services. Our state jails are so overcrowded that Corrective Services have been forced to take drastic action. We have double-up placements, we have buddy cells, we have temporary bunk beds, we have trundle beds and mattresses in secure cells and in residential areas.

Injuries received yesterday in the incident that I referred to earlier included concussion from an elbow to the side of the head, a possible fractured cheekbone and a broken nose. Five officers required medical assessment. Assaults on prison staff in the first six months of this year have increased by 83 per cent. This is clearly unacceptable. No employee of a state government who works in an incredibly difficult situation should have to go to work and wonder whether they are going to return home that night in a way that is safe.

Our message to the minister is to take heed of his own words when he was in opposition, when he said that any increased assaults that came from prison overcrowding should be the direct responsibility of the minister. He is the minister and he needs to heed those words and take responsibility for it. The worst-case scenario is that our prisons are turning into fight clubs and they are quickly becoming uncontrollable. It is bad enough that prisoner assaults have increased, but assaults on prison officers are totally unacceptable.