




Speech By
Jessica Pugh

MEMBER FOR MOUNT OMMANEY

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INSPECTOR OF DETENTION SERVICES BILL

 **Ms PUGH** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (11.15 am), continuing: As I was so rudely interrupted two weeks ago for the adjournment debate, just last week I had the opportunity to attend another graduation ceremony for some corrections officers in my Wacol precinct that I was speaking about earlier in my contribution. All of those officers are now heading out to Woodford which is fantastic. I know that my colleague the member for Caloundra was watching because I referenced him in my speech on that day and I got a nice little text message. That is the kind of close and collegial relationship that many corrections officers continue to have with their colleagues even after they depart.

When it comes to being a corrections officer, I heard from some of the graduates and the training officers that the best days in the job are the days when nothing happens, when they do not make the news and everything is quiet. As I have said, I have had the honour of going to graduation ceremonies and also to sit in on some of the morning briefings for their custodial officers when they go through what their anticipated run of the day is. I have to say that I found the information shared in those briefings quite confronting and I was left in no doubt as to the gravity of what our officers deal with in their day-to-day job. They are never sure whether they are going to have a predictable day—that is what we all hope for for them—or they are going to have an unexpected or a difficult day.

In addition to parts of the job being unpredictable, the role can be difficult to oversight. That is why the inspectorate of detention is so important. As the member for Keppel commented, the experience of the prisoners is a key part of the many factors that determine whether a prisoner who has served their sentence will reoffend. For this reason, if for no other, each and every Queenslanders is indirectly and directly invested in the treatment of our prison population. I think that we are all starting to come around to understanding and realising that.

When I was at the ceremony last week, a great amount of the contribution from the presiding officers really spoke to the importance of the relationship between the custodial officers and the detainees because it is that relationship that will form a critical part of whether they reoffend, their rehabilitation prospects and how they go on to form their place in the community when they are allowed back out into the community. That is the ultimate goal of the rehabilitation work that our corrective services staff and facilities undertake.

As is ever the case, we give thanks to our secretariat staff, who time and time again do such excellent work in the formation of these reports. I recognise the committee members: Peter Russo, the member for Toohey; Jonty Bush, the member for Cooper; Sandy Bolton, the member for Noosa; Laura Gerber, the member for Currumbin; Mr Andrew Powell, the member for Glass House; and my very good friend Jason Hunt, the member for Caloundra.

The objective of the bill is to ensure that an independent inspectorate exists to promote and uphold the humane treatment and conditions of people detained in prisons and community correction centres, work camps, youth detention centres and police watch houses. There are hundreds of people in my community who work in these facilities. In fact, just last week I was privileged to meet the deputy principal of the youth detention centre school. It was fantastic to hear about the role she plays in the

rehabilitation of these young people. It is really clear to me that as a sector the department of corrections really understands the importance of the rehabilitation role they play in the lives of young offenders in our communities. I know that custodial corrections officers in Queensland are well-trained. They are an enormously professional group of staff and they do a very difficult job in even more difficult conditions. It is a job that, simply put, many Queenslanders would not sign up for because the working conditions are really tough and really stressful.

All of the submissions the committee received were broadly supportive of the establishment of an inspector in Queensland. Two concerns were raised by some submitters around resourcing and whether the bill provides an avenue for staff concerns as well concerns of as detainees. To that end, the inspectorate will not investigate specific incidents or complaints, but staff will be able to provide information to the inspector which may be relevant. I think that is really important.

In the brief time I have left I will reference something I said earlier in my speech; that is, the police who work so well and so hard in our community. The community has a really large amount of oversight over the work that police do because a large amount of their work is community-based and it is really clear to the community where they are spending a large amount of their time. Conversely, our custodial officers, who really work in partnership with our police, do not have the same level of oversight. Much of what they do is a mystery to the community. I know from the many custodial officers I speak to that it is something they would like to see improved. They would love for the community to know more about what it is they do, for example, the kitten program in the women's prison in Wacol. I think this is going to be a wonderful step forward to shed some light on what is happening in our Corrective Services facilities.