

MURRAY BRIDGE PRISON

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond): Will the Attorney-General advise the house what plans the government has made to upgrade existing infrastructure and services at Murray Bridge to cater for the significant increase in activity resulting from the projected tripling of the current prison capacity? The Chief Executive Officer of the Murraylands Regional Development Board has raised concerns regarding the adequacy of current services, including housing, transport, education, health, mental health and counselling services.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON (Attorney-General): Most councils in non-metropolitan South Australia would jump at the chance to have a new prison in their area. The former Liberal spokesman on prisons of blessed memory—that was the Hon. Angus Redford—used to criticise the government because the imprisonment rate had not gone up enough. What was the swing against him in Bright?

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

Ms CHAPMAN: On a point of order: the imprisonment rate has nothing to do with the regional service requirements referred to in the question asked.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! I am listening to where the Attorney's answer is going. It needs to go to the substance of the question.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: Its trajectory will become apparent, sir. The Liberal opposition used to criticise us for not imprisoning enough people. I notice that the day before yesterday the new spokesperson, the Hon. Michelle Lensink, criticised us for increasing the prison population by 14 per cent. Obviously, a bit of reconciliation needs to be done in the opposition party room.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: Yes; this government has brought in the biggest overhaul of criminal law and procedure in the history of the state—that is what I do between doorknocking—and, as a result, the crime rate is going down but, because of the increased number of police, police crime is going up because there is more enforcement.

Ms CHAPMAN: I rise on a point of order, Mr Speaker. The issue of crime rate has nothing to do with the question of regional infrastructure required for this proposed development.

The SPEAKER: I am hoping the Attorney is about to demonstrate what it has to do with regional infrastructure.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: Mr Speaker, the Liberal opposition has argued that we need more prisons in South Australia. It has been crying out for a new women's prison. If the member for Hammond is right about what is in the budget, it looks like Labor is doing it. Don't complain.