

PRISONERS TO LOSE THEIR REMISSIONS

IN future, prisoners in State gaols under Federal law will serve the full sentences intended by the Courts, the Minister for Justice, Senator Tate, announced this month.

"The time has come to say 'no longer' to the situation where a minimum term set by a judge bears no relation to the actual time a person spends in prison," he said.

Senator Tate, who is Minister in charge of the AFP, was delivering the Sir Samuel Griffiths Memorial Lecture to the Australian Young Lawyers Section of the Australian Law Council at the National Press Club on 2 May.

He said that because there were no Federal prisons, offenders who had been convicted of a crime against Federal law, such as importing drugs or committing a major fraud against the Commonwealth, until now had been treated in the same way as State prisoners sentenced to the same terms.

The same remissions and parole systems applied.

"For example, I have a note on a Federal prisoner who received a 15-year maximum sentence for conspiracy to import heroin," he said. "He was given five years' minimum term but with State remissions, only served three years and one month of his sentence.

"This happens several times a week with Federal prisoners in NSW, Victoria, SA and WA. For Federal offenders, this will no longer be the case," he said.

Judges would set the prison term and a parole period to follow that term.

"The sentence will mean what it says," he said. "The prisoner will remain in prison for the period set by the judge. The State remissions which can eat away at the minimum sentence will no longer be available to Federal prisoners."

He said it was not a measure designed to impose harsher penalties, but to impose certainty in sentencing.

"The judge, the prisoner and the



Senator Michael Tate.

public will know at the time of sentencing precisely how long the offender will be incarcerated," he said.

He believed those on the Bench should have the fullest range of sentencing options. An agreement had already been negotiated with Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria and the Northern Territory to allow for community service orders as an alternative to imprisonment, particularly in the case of Social Security offenders, the Minister said. •

GUY FAWKES RENDERED SAFE

HOPEFULLY an Australian Guy Fawkes will never appear, although the staff at Parliament House should be ready for one.

The Australian Bomb Data Centre (ABDC) is in the midst of training the 400 security personnel stationed at the new Parliament House in how to recognize and handle bombs.

The ABDC, formed after the Sydney Hilton Hotel bombing in 1978, is the national body which collects, assesses and disseminates intelligence about explosives throughout Australia. It is headed by Detective Superintendent Gary Symons and its members are all trained bomb technicians.

Its job is to ensure all bomb technicians throughout the country are kept informed of current bombing trends, equipment and training methods. It is backed up by the Bomb Response Team (Bomb Squad) whose members work from ACT Region and are on standby to attend bomb threats and handle explosives.

The Parliament House security personnel are being trained in all facets

of bomb response during a four-day course which equips them to handle any crisis with which they may be faced.

The ABDC also conducts courses for other government agencies such as ASIO, Telecom and Australia Post, and eight-day courses for AFP members in airports and other high-risk locations. Recently the centre ran its first course for the Australian Protective Service. Courses cover

bomb searches, identification and appropriate responses.

Staffed jointly by seven AFP personnel and two army liaison officers, the ABDC operates under a series of Memorandums of Understanding between the AFP, all state police and the Defence Department. These detail action to be taken when explosive devices are located. The state police get the majority of reports and the military perform the 'render safe' procedures in most states.



Sergeant Terry Burton instructs Parliament House security personnel on a bomb search and identification course.