

ST. HELENA - The Telegraph 23 July 1919

<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article174654669>

#### ST. HELENA

Perhaps one of the greatest incongruities that strikes the visitor to our city and its surroundings is that St. Helena, one of the most beautiful and fertile islands in Moreton Bay, should be utilised only for the purpose of a penal establishment. Except in the cost of transferring the prisoners to a main land gaol, we cannot see any valid reason for continuing to use the island for its present purpose. On the other hand, as the Home Secretary himself admits, there is greater cost in the maintenance of an island prison because of the cost of transport and loss of time for officials and other travelling- to and from the place, — to say nothing of inconvenience to married members of the prison staff. It is understood that the Comptroller-General of Prisons (Major A. T. Peirson) is in favour of transferring the prison to the mainland. On the point of expense, Mr. Huxham points out that at present most of the buildings on the island are in a dilapidated and dangerous condition and the cost of a new island prison would be about

£120,000 as against only half that sum for the construction of a mainland prison. Though Mr. Huxham does not hold out much hope of his being able to make the change in the near future, it is something to have the Government recognising that the island has for too long been withheld from becoming what it is so manifestly fit to be, — the leading pleasure resort of the people of Brisbane. The wonderful fertility of the island would enable it to be transformed into a perfect garden. On the question of the use to which the island might be put, there is no occasion for haste. Mr. Huxham favours leasing the island to some person or company for use as a pleasure resort, for he is afraid that if the island were left to the care of the general public, it soon would be overrun with weeds. Some time ago, a deputation of boating men asked that the Island should be converted into a pleasure resort, and we have not the slightest doubt that the boating men would soon rid Mr. Huxham of his fears about the weeds, and we have Green Island as a good example of what enterprise can do on a pretty island of Moreton Bay. Incidentally to the statement about the

future of St. Helena, the Home Secretary spoke generally about our prison system. The public, we think, will agree with him in the view that imprisonment should be reformatory rather than punitive. In that view, Major Peirson is wholly with the Home Secretary, and, what is more to the point — as is well known — he is zealous for putting the principle into practice with all those who are so unfortunate as to be imprisoned in the gaols under his control. The Home Secretary's anxiety is for a site offering adequate scope for the carrying on of healthy out-door activities, such as farming, gardening, quarrying, and the like; he is a thorough believer in the open-air treatment of prisoners, and dry statistics justify his faith in that treatment as assisting greatly in the reformation of prisoners. It has been found that by healthy occupation, by implanting in prisoners the belief that tlio community, far from revenging itself on them, earnestly desires that they should no longer be offenders against the law, the road to reformation is opened wide, and that the favourable turn in the whole life of

an offender, many a time has come when he has been in prison subjected to an enlightened reformatory influence. In all countries where this more enlightened method of dealing with prisoners has been tried, an" unmistakably great diminution in crimes and other offences against the law has been the result.