

Attorney-General visits

By Patrick Wood

THE state's Attorney-General, Greg Smith, toured the Riverina in the past two days as part of a visitation schedule to Junee and Mannus correctional centres.

The fact-finding mission is part of ongoing familiarisation with the state's jails by Mr Smith, who yesterday said he took particular note of initiatives at Junee.

"It was very positive, Junee is different from most, it's got some novel systems," he said.

The privately-run centre uses inmates to conduct maintenance

and is also involved in community work.

Mr Smith's tour didn't include a visit to the Riverina Juvenile Justice Centre which has received a further \$9.6 million in state government funding for a redevelopment.

But the visit does come at a time when the Attorney-General is facing criticism for review of the Young Offenders Act (YOA) will take a soft approach to juvenile crime.

Mr Smith will consider about 20 submissions to the review, some of which call for youths arrested for robbery in company,

breach of AVO and some assault crimes to be spared jail and instead given cautions.

"This argument that it's a soft approach, we keep saying we want (the review) to take a sensible approach," he said.

"I am tough on violent crime, and in fact tougher than some of my predecessors."

Mr Smith said his finalised YOA would ensure any youths arrested for armed robbery or indecent assault will face court.

This was balanced by a wish to see youths arrested for less serious crimes to be kept out of jail.