



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR MOGGILL

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CORRECTIVE SERVICES AND PENALTIES AND SENTENCES AMENDMENT BILL

Dr WATSON (Moggill—LP) (Leader of the Liberal Party) (8.53 p.m.): I rise to support the Corrective Services and Penalties and Sentences Amendment Bill 1998, introduced by the honourable member for Warwick. I do not intend to speak for very long tonight, because it does not take very long to succinctly put the case for this Bill. Unlike the Attorney-General, the coalition has a clear idea of the kinds of things that are necessary to address the issue of crime.

The Attorney-General ought to understand that this Bill is an important part of a multifaceted strategy to fight crime in our society. We in this place all know—the Attorney-General should know—that there is not simply one solution to the rising crime rate. Despite what the Attorney-General said, this Bill does not pretend to be a cure-all. We know that the problem needs to be attacked from all sides, but I believe that the community needs to devote considerably more resources to developing policies and ideas that are genuinely aimed at crime prevention. There is absolutely no question on this side of the House that that is necessary.

Concentrating on prevention and early intervention should not mean neglecting the punishment end of the crime. That is what the Attorney-General seems to forget. For too long sentencing in this State has sent a mixed message. Law-abiding citizens have become frustrated and at times outraged at the inadequate time serious offenders actually spend in jail. A mixed message is also being sent to offenders and potential offenders. That mixed message is that, depending upon a set of ill-defined circumstances, it is anybody's guess how long a person will serve for a serious violent crime. Perhaps for less serious, non-violent crimes there is some justification for such a response, but for serious violent crimes the time has come to provide certainty. The time has come to send a clear message. The time has come to get serious with serious violent offenders.

This truth in sentencing Bill is not just a simplistic version of the cry that "if you do the crime, you do the time". Rather, this Bill is a well thought out, considered response to a real problem. Contrary to what the Government, through the Attorney-General, tries to tell us—and I am sure other speakers on the other side of the House will also try to tell us—this Bill does not mean that serious violent offenders will be let straight back into the community without any supervision upon completion of their sentence. In fact, before the honourable member for Warwick introduced this Bill it was considered significantly by the policy committees of the joint parties and this issue was addressed. The Bill ensures that serious violent offenders will have to undergo community supervision upon release. Depending upon the prisoner's behaviour whilst in jail, this community supervision program will last between six months and five years.

The community wants and needs the certainty that this Bill provides. If the original crime is worth 10 years, then it is worth 10 years—not four years and eight months, not five years and two months, not six years and three months, but 10 years. We must send a clear, simple message to those people in the community who would commit serious violent crime. That message is that they will not be walking free and thumbing their noses at the community and their victims after serving half, three-quarters or seven-eighths of their sentences. They will do the full time for serious violent crime. The community has had enough of people not taking full responsibility for their actions. I commend the Bill to the House.
