



Speech by

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CORRECTIVE SERVICES AND PENALTIES AND SENTENCES AMENDMENT BILL

Dr PRENZLER (Lockyer—ONP) (9.41 p.m.): One Nation's policy and philosophy have supported truth in sentencing almost since our inception. We have said many times that 10 years should mean 10 years and that life should mean life. Truth in sentencing not only serves as a deterrent to would-be criminals but also provides the community—and this is the important part—with the safety they deserve and ensures that offenders receive appropriate punishment. One hundred per cent truth in sentencing is not only simple but it is also logical.

The legal system currently confuses most ordinary people. The way in which sentences are handed down leaves them somewhat baffled. Why sentence someone to 15 years in jail if we intend for them to be out in 10? Where is the logic in this? The public has had enough of the Government's soft-touch attitude with criminals. If people are law-abiding citizens, the Government will make them work hard, then take most of it off them to spend on whichever minority group it can buy votes from; it gives them no breaks whatsoever and then kicks them in the teeth at the end of the day—if it can still find a way of doing that. But if people belong to a minority group, they will receive extra help. If people are dole bludgers, the Government will look after them. And if people commit a crime, the Government will feed them, clothe them and provide them with sporting equipment, videos, computers and even an education. They will be accommodated in airconditioned luxury while our schoolchildren toil in sweatboxes.

While some are being thrown in jail for crimes which can be punishable by other means, criminals who commit disgusting, unforgivable crimes receive sentences which simply do not measure up to the crime that has been committed. Then they are released years earlier than their sentences should permit. Why is it that the people who do the wrong thing seem to be let off the most lightly? Quite simply, if someone commits a crime and is sentenced to a specific time in jail, then that sentence should be upheld; it should be served in total. Whether or not the sentence is for life, for seven years, for 15 years, 20 years or whatever, the entire sentence should be served with no exemptions—bar a pardon. It is about time that we stopped playing with this issue. The time has come to reverse the "protect the criminal and to hell with the victim" mentality that seems to be pervading our thinking today; it has developed in this country and very much so in this State.

Queenslanders need some security. Victims and their families deserve justice, and people who commit these crimes need to know that the consequences of their actions will cost them very dearly. The financial cost of this should not come into the debate. I have heard that mentioned a number of times. When over half a million dollars to renovate a ministerial office is "well within an allowable expense for such a purpose", surely, by comparison, expenditure on ensuring public safety is negligible.

Already in this debate we have listened to members on the Labor Party's side of the Chamber make excuses for criminals: "What if the criminal is a good person who just happened to get involved in drugs and then just happened to commit some ghastly crime? But it was the drugs that made him do it, and the poor criminal should not be disadvantaged because of that." Has anyone ever heard of responsibility? That person chose to take the drugs, then chose to break the law, and that person should be made to take the responsibility for his or her actions and suffer accordingly.

Mr Pearce: You haven't lived, mate.

Dr PRENZLER: I have not been on many picket lines, either.

The Labor Party is quick to jump to the defence of those who break the law, but rarely ever mentions the victims of crime. What about those innocent law-abiding citizens who did not choose to be raped or beaten or tortured or murdered, such as a number who have been mentioned here tonight? What sort of sentence do they receive? I do not think they get off early for good behaviour. They do not get the luxury of free sports equipment, education, etc., and they do not get the luxury of parole. Many lose their freedom for life.

This Bill must be supported because it toughens up the existing laws. Even though this Bill is a direct extract from One Nation's policy ideas, I have no problem in supporting good legislation from any party that presents it. One must give credit when it is due, and the coalition deserves applause for its stance on increasing the toughness on crime. Unfortunately, this Bill does not go all the way in ensuring complete truth in sentencing. It allows prisoners to be eligible for parole and home detention after 15 years. One hundred per cent truth in sentencing should contain no parole or home detention allowances at all.

Mr Pearce: That's right. Turn them out in the streets so they can go and do it again.

Dr PRENZLER: I ask the member to wait. I will get to that. If a criminal is sentenced to 25 years in jail, that person should serve 25 years and no less. One hundred per cent truth in sentencing is the only way. It is fairer, more just and more sensible all round. Under this Bill, that person will be eligible for parole and home detention after 15 years. We realise that there are reasons for this. However, we will support this Bill because it is commonsense legislation which is in the best interests of Queensland, and it does strengthen the current laws.

In the absence of capital punishment, truth in sentencing is necessary for serious violent offenders and should, in fact, exist for all offenders. Perhaps if the sentences were tougher and less flexible, and the Government stopped making excuses for crime, potential criminals might think twice about the consequences of their actions.

This Bill is to introduce truth in sentencing for serious violent crimes, not for the normal run-of-the-mill type of things that happen. It allows for home detention, parole and leaves of absence and allows for sentences greater than 15 years, including life, to be eligible for all three of those options after 15 years. So that puts down a few of the Labor Party's arguments. It also introduces a community-based assessment of prisoners after release for a minimum period of six months up to five years, depending on their behaviour while in jail. I urge all members of this House to support this Bill and, in doing so, to support the victims of crime, not the criminals.
