



Speech by

## Darren Grimwade

MEMBER FOR MORAYFIELD

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### PENALTIES AND SENTENCES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

**Mr GRIMWADE** (Morayfield—LNP) (7.40 pm): At the outset, I lay on the table that I will be supporting this bill. The Newman government is committed to revitalising front-line services in Queensland. In fact, it was a cornerstone of our commitment to Queenslanders that we would revitalise front-line services, in particular in the policing sector. As I have mentioned many times in this House in many debates, I have been a fierce advocate of those front-line police officers who serve our communities. By supporting this bill we will again throw some advocacy behind these guys who go out of their way to protect our communities on a daily basis. As we have heard in this place, and as we all know, the Newman government is committed to delivering 1,100 additional front-line police officers on the beat. That is a huge number of additional police officers on the beat. It is an example of how we are delivering to protect our communities, such as my community of Morayfield. It is also an example of what the public expects us as a government to do, and that is to make safer communities for us to live in. Many members of this House, including me, have children and there are also other people who need to be protected. In that regard, these additional front-line police officers will definitely tick all the boxes. My electorate has already benefited from five additional police officers since the election. That has been great news for my area. My electorate has received additional officers who have gone through the academy and also some second-year police officers who have come from other electorates. That shows that a lot of police officers are willing to relocate to my area. That is great news.

This bill will be a massive advantage in building up our overall police numbers in Queensland. This legislation will effectively raise \$35 million through law enforcement initiatives that will put a penalty on those criminals who do the most heinous things in our community—those guys who go out of their way to do things in our community that do not live up to community expectations. I think slapping this extra fee onto those who are doing the wrong thing will be really well received by the community. Most people understand that we need to fund that \$275 million announcement of 1,100 new police officers. Most people would also understand in their hearts that those who do the wrong thing by the community should be forced to pay an additional penalty. In effect, with that \$35 million penalty they are making a contribution, if you like, to the \$275 million that it is going to cost to provide 1,100 new front-line police to our beat.

As I said earlier, this is what the community expects. When I get out into my community and speak to people, I hear that there is a community expectation to provide safer communities. There is a community expectation that the government will do whatever it takes, including during very hard financial times, to deliver, firstly, its election promises and, secondly, its commitment as a government to ensure that our communities are safe. As I mentioned, we are doing things tough in Queensland. But we are also implementing our election commitments. We are delivering on our commitment of 1,100 new police officers—a \$275 million commitment. Things are tough. We know that. We have been left with a legacy of \$65 billion of debt, as it is currently, with the possibility, if we did not change things, for that debt to blow out to \$100 billion. So we are a government that stands here committed to ensuring that we will do things right by Queenslanders. We will deliver on their expectations and we will continue to move forward to ensure that we can do that as a government.

Obviously, an important part of the financial situation that we find ourselves in is the loss of our AAA credit rating. Today, we have heard that the fact that we lost our AAA credit rating during the term of the former Labor government is costing us hundreds of millions of dollars. That is hundreds of millions of dollars that we could be putting towards additional police, to front-line services—to really focus on those areas that we want to focus on, which is revitalising our front-line services.

I want to touch on another section of the bill, which relates to our health services. I have no doubt that our nurses in Queensland are very hardworking people. They offer professional services that are critical to our community. Our nurses deserve to be paid correctly and on time. It is an expectation of not only the community but also all health practitioners and nurses that they get paid correctly and they get paid on time. The Health payroll disaster is costing this government around \$1.25 billion. If we did not have that \$1.25 billion debt arising out of the Health payroll disaster, we would be able to fund initiatives for our nurses, obviously pay them on time and give them the support they need. At the moment, there is \$91 million in overpayments outstanding. As much as I know that nurses need and expect to get paid, these overpayments will be recouped by this bill in a fair and compassionate way to ensure that that \$91 million can be put towards providing cost-of-living relief and front-line service delivery for Queenslanders. It is only fair that the government will act to recoup these overpayments and direct the funds towards providing better service delivery for Queenslanders.

I will give members a couple of examples from my electorate. Currently, the Caboolture Hospital in my region is struggling. I have mentioned this issue previously in speeches that I have made in this place. Recently, I was speaking to two ambulance officers in my electorate. When I approached them the first question these gentlemen asked me was, 'What is your government doing to unblock the emergency department at Caboolture Hospital and what are you doing about ambulance ramping?' As we got into the discussion I started to tell them what we were doing about emergency services in Queensland and the government's plans to pay down debt to get our AAA credit rating back and to have a balanced budget so that we could deliver front-line health services. I also told them what the government was doing currently in terms of unblocking the emergency department. The ambulance officer who I spoke to first told me that things were critical for him. In fact, he went on to say that, on average, every time they take someone to Caboolture Hospital they are stuck there, ramped, for two hours. I know that everyone in this House would understand that that means effectively that those ambulance officers take a patient to the hospital and then they are stuck there. Instead of being available to be called to attend other areas of critical need, those ambulance officers are stuck there, ramped up with the patient in the bed in the ambulance. That is an example of why we need to recoup some of these overpayments so that we can put funds into the delivery of health services and front-line services.

The Newman government will protect employees from having their pay amounts reduced inappropriately by the repayment deductions. This is an important part of this bill. Recently, when I was holding a National Tree Day event at a shopping centre in my electorate I was approached by a nurse who had been overpaid. She had received quite a substantial amount of money in overpayments throughout this process.

Her comments to me were something along the lines of 'We know we have been overpaid. We expect to pay it back.' What the nurses and the health practitioners are saying is that they want to pay it back, they want a government that will take responsibility, they want a government that will move to ensure that the overpayments are corrected immediately and large debts are not incurred. This is what this act will do. What this particular nurse was telling me at the National Tree Day ticks all the boxes.

In summing up, this Newman government that I stand part of will act responsibly to ensure that the state's finances are balanced and focused to regain our AAA credit rating. It is through this responsible financial management and hard decision making that we will be able to fund appropriate front-line services to our communities and get Queensland back on track. These are two examples of things that we can do to ensure that we have the money in tough economic times so that we can deliver for Queenslanders—deliver for nurses, police, teachers and all other public servants in front-line roles throughout Queensland. It is because of this that I will be supporting the bill tonight. I commend the bill to the House.