




Speech by

Darren Grimwade

MEMBER FOR MORAYFIELD

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CRIMINAL LAW AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr GRIMWADE** (Morayfield—LNP) (3.03 pm): Today I rise to contribute to the debate on the Criminal Law Amendment Bill 2012. From the outset I inform the House that I will be supporting this bill. Those who know me will understand that I have been a strong advocate for the boys and girls in blue in Queensland—the police force. We are a government that must legislate to ensure that appropriate penalties exist to deter those in our communities who want to do the wrong thing. This will give them a chance to think twice about their actions and the consequences that will be associated with them. As part of our pre-election commitment, the Newman government committed to making it illegal to lie in parliament. We have already implemented that election commitment. We also made the commitment to toughen sentences when people evade police, and that measure is contained in the bill that we are debating today. We said that we would take a tougher stance in relation to repeat child sex offenders, and we have already legislated for that in this House. Further, we said that we would introduce tougher sentences for serious assaults committed upon Queensland police officers and murder, and again these issues are dealt with in this bill. Those commitments were put forward during the election campaign so that we could ensure that we would be a government that offered a tough stance on crime, because our communities have a high expectation of us to do just that. This bill and other legislation previously debated in this House over the last couple of months will continue to strive to ensure that we deliver on our election commitments.

I now want to address some of the important issues in this bill specifically. The bill before the House today adopts a tough new approach to the handling of life sentences for murder. The amendments increase the non-parole period for the offence of murder from 15 years to 20 years imprisonment and applies a new 30-year non-parole period for multiple murders. These increases ensure that the punishment fits the severity of these offences. The bill delivers on the government's commitment to provide strengthened protection to police officers acting in the performance of their duties day to day and in particular our pledge to deal specifically with the murder of police officers. These men and women perform their duties each day in the face of inherent dangers and high-risk situations. Criminals who murder police officers must and will face tough punishment here in Queensland. The bill amends the Criminal Code to insert a new minimum non-parole period of 25 years imprisonment for the offence of murder where the victim was a police officer. This legislation also increases the maximum penalty for the serious assault of a police officer from seven years imprisonment to 14 years imprisonment in circumstances where the offender bites, spits or applies any bodily fluids or faeces to the police officer or where the assault does the police officer any bodily harm. The higher penalty will also apply where the offender is armed with dangerous or offensive weapons.

The bill amends section 754 of the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000 in that it will now be an offence to fail to stop a motor vehicle when the driver of the vehicle has been directed to do so by a police officer. This is one of the areas that I want to address in this bill and one of the issues that local police officers around the electorate have given me feedback about, not only recently but throughout my time as a candidate before the election. Before addressing that specific issue, this is an area that is very important to police. When one listens to police officers in the community and asks what is the No. 1 thing they would change, nine times out of 10 this particular issue will raise its head and therefore I want to

address that specifically in terms of this bill. As it stands, there is no real deterrent to stop an offender evading police. In fact, as the current legislation stands, there is more of an incentive to evade the police. Let me give the House a couple of examples outlined by local police officers. At a recent community corner in my electorate one police officer stopped by to discuss this very issue, and I will give the House an example. If a police officer wants to conduct a random breath test, for example, the police officer will direct that person to pull over for a breath test.

As the legislation stands currently, there is more incentive for that person to try to evade the police officer than to get caught. If they evade the police officer, they will cop a fine—usually about only 300 bucks. If they get caught, they will have to deal with heavier fines, licence disqualifications and court appearances. This bill amends the offence for evading police officers by inserting a mandatory minimum penalty of a fine of \$5,000 and a two-year disqualification from holding or obtaining a driver's licence.

As members can see, it is a tough stance under this bill. It ensures that, where these people are committing these crimes or where they are trying to evade police, this new fine of \$5,000 will provide a big disincentive for people to try to do that. The criminals out in our local communities know that they can try to evade police and get a slap on the wrist with a small fine. This amendment makes our communities safer and, by making our communities safer, the mums and dads in our local areas will understand that we are doing something to fix the problem. The last thing we need in our local communities are people like this—intoxicated people driving their cars off at high speed to try to evade a random breath test. They could run over a child near a school. That is one flow-on effect from drivers having alcohol in their system. This amendment is a critical part of the bill as it ensures that we are protecting our communities and making them safe places in which families can raise their children.

It is my belief that our communities should expect a government to be tough on crime. During the election campaign and since becoming a member holding my community corners, I would say that at least eight or nine out of 10 times someone comes to me they want to speak to me about the cost of living or crime. The mums and dads in my community are sick to death of criminals laughing in the face of law enforcement and getting a slap on the wrist. They are sick and tired of Labor's weak stance on crime. I make no apologies for my hard stance on crime and my continued advocacy for the police officers of Queensland. Before each and every shift they kiss their families goodbye and then go out into the community and risk their lives so that our communities are safe.

Crime is one of the biggest issues in my community and I am proud to say that already I have been able to deliver on measures to make my community safe. Eight new police officers have been allocated to my electorate. We have protected our kids from sex predators and now we are moving to legislate to deter criminals from breaking the law and to offer protection to our police officers. In fact, as recently as today I saw in my local paper a photo of a police officer in my electorate giving a spiel on TruCAM, which is a device that recognises numberplates, has facial recognition technology and a number of other things that are critical to the police performing their jobs at a high level. That is another resource that has been delivered to my region, which had been lacking for some time and which had been called for. I know from attending Neighbourhood Watch meetings in my electorate and listening to the local police that that technology is something that the police have been looking to get. It has finally been delivered to my region and is a permanent fixture at the Caboolture Police District.

Members will notice that today I am wearing the QPS tie in memory of Coomera detective, Damian Leeding, who tragically lost his life while performing his duty to protect our community, and for his family, who have suffered his loss. I commend this bill to the House for the very reason that it protects our police officers. It provides a real deterrent against people trying to break the law, assaulting or murdering police officers, or trying to evade police officers. That gives me good reason to support this bill. I commend the bill to the House.