




Speech by

Hon. David Crisafulli

MEMBER FOR MUNDINGBURRA

Hansard Tuesday, 21 August 2012

CRIMINAL LAW AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. DF CRISAFULLI** (Mundingburra—LNP) (Minister for Local Government) (3.43 pm): It is with great pleasure that I rise to support the Criminal Law Amendment Bill 2012, and I do so for a couple of reasons. The first thing is it is wonderful when a government campaigns on something and then has the opportunity to deliver it and deliver what it says it is going to do. Indeed, this is something that the community wanted. They spoke very clearly during the election campaign about this, and I will talk more about that in detail.

But there is another reason why, and that is that I have a deep admiration for the men and women of our police force. They are indeed great people. As I look around the chamber I see some former officers in here who know firsthand how tough it is to be a police officer, but they make a mighty contribution to ensure our society is a safe and just one.

The bill delivers on our election commitments in four key areas. One is amending the Criminal Code to increase the non-parole period for murder from 15 to 20 years for a single murder and from 20 to 30 years for multiple murderers. It amends the Criminal Code to insert a new minimum non-parole period of 25 years for the offence of murder where the victim was a police officer. It amends the Criminal Code to increase the maximum penalty for the offence of serious assault of a police officer from seven to 14 years, and it amends the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act to introduce a mandatory minimum penalty of \$5,000 and two years licence disqualification for the offence of evading police.

The two matters that I would particularly like to discuss relate to assaults or murder of police officers. I want to start with assault. I will speak to some statistics from my part of the world. Those who know me know that I am an unashamedly proud regional Queenslander. I love my home and I live in the electorate of Mundingburra but I feel a deep affinity for all of regional Queensland. It deeply troubles me when I read that in the 2011 financial year the Northern Region reported the highest rate of assaults on police in the state. To give members an indication of how serious that is, across the Northern Region 37.2 per cent of our officers reported an assault. So more than one in three officers in the Northern Region have been assaulted during that financial year.

In the Townsville district, that figure was a little lower—32.3 per cent. Here is the one that should concern members. In the Mount Isa area, which is covered by the Northern Region, 59.6 per cent of police have reported a serious assault in that financial year—59.6 per cent. One wonders how anyone can speak against anything that can give protection to men and women who just want to get out of bed and serve us when there are statistics like that. If you work in a particular area there is a better than one in two chance that you will be assaulted by some grub while you are trying to keep the community safe.

I ask members to consider what that means. What does it mean for a police officer to be assaulted? Obviously there are the physical issues. There are the bloody noses and the broken arms, but imagine what it does to your family life if you have been spat on by one of these grubs. Imagine what it puts your family through for the many months that you have to wait for test results. Imagine what that does to your partner, whether that be your wife or your husband. Imagine what that does. Imagine how that makes you feel around your kids that you love. Each and every day when we come into this House we have to ask

ourselves how we can make society better. We can make it a damn sight better if we can focus on protecting our police officers.

I now turn to murder. The member for Bundamba asked why should we treat police differently. Well I can tell her why. When somebody murders a police officer it is not just a crime against that individual; it is a crime against all of society. Those people put on a uniform because they want to protect each and every one of us. That is why it is different. They are the heroes of our society. They put their lives on the line and they deserve our protection.

I was interested in what the member for Coomera said when he spoke about his community survey, because I can report a similar story from my part of the world. I do the same as the member for Coomera. I send a survey out. It is not push polling. It is not, 'What do you think about this particular issue—good, bad or indifferent?' I ask them what they think and time and time again crime comes up. I struggle with why anyone who can profess to being in touch with their electorate could come in here and say that these are not wonderful changes to our laws. This is what our community wants. Our community wants tougher sentences against grubs. They want our police officers protected. They want to know that if some turkey jumps in a car and goes speeding off at a million miles an hour something can be done about it.

The member for Burdekin mentioned a word that means so much—that is, respect for police officers, and it is something that is all too lacking. The reason it is lacking is that these people know that if they are getting put into the back of a paddy wagon and they give an officer a bit of a slap around there will not be a lot of consequences. They know that if they give them a bit of lip, if they spit on them or if they fail to treat that uniform with any form of respect nothing will come of it. That will change.

I sincerely believe this bill will make a difference. We have seen a few things come through this House during the short time that this government has been in power, and this unashamedly puts the focus and the protection back on those people doing the right thing and it unashamedly makes sure that those who are doing the wrong thing can go to the place where they deserve to be if they fall foul of the law. I support the bill.