




Speech by

Deb Frecklington

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

Hansard Tuesday, 21 August 2012

CRIMINAL LAW AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (8.00 pm): I rise to support the Criminal Law Amendment Bill 2012 which aims to put in place six important new changes: to increase the non-parole period for multiple murders from 20 to 30 years; to create a new minimum non-parole period of 25 years for the murder of a police officer; to increase the maximum penalty for the serious assault of a police officer from seven to 14 years; to increase the non-parole period for murder to 20 years; tough new penalties for evading police; and the taking away of the Sentencing Advisory Council Queensland. I congratulate the Attorney-General on bringing this bill to the House as it is much needed. I would also like to formally recognise the hardworking men and women who are in the Police Force within the Nanango electorate for their hard work which is quite often under severe conditions. I would also like to thank my colleague, Mr Ray Hopper, the chair of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee, along with committee members for their work in producing the report on this bill.

From information that I have been able to obtain, total assaults on police officers within the Nanango electorate for the 2010-11 year was 431. That is horrific. The total assaults on police for the state was 2,331. That is 2,331 too many assaults on those hardworking officers. It is also interesting to note in those figures that the number of offences of public nuisance, which are often offences the offender commits against police officers or ambulance officers or anyone trying to assist a situation, was 4,341. It is just ridiculous.

As members know, I have worked within the criminal law field as a solicitor. I fully support this Criminal Law Amendment Bill. It is perhaps one of the most important bills that we have passed to date in this government because it addresses penalties for those in our society who commit the most serious of crimes, crimes which have the ability to take away our feeling of freedom, innocence, the ability to destroy communities and families and which alter the social fabric and our outlook on life. I have been involved in my position as a local solicitor in many matters, including murder and offences where local police officers have been spat on and assaulted. It is, in my opinion, completely unacceptable. They have been doing their duty; what they have been paid to do. I have seen the strain it has put on those local police officers as they wait for the HIV virus tests to come back and the desk duties that they are assigned to because they are incapable of fronting the public.

I recently conducted a survey within my electorate. I asked people what was the most important issue for them. In the majority of responses the people of Nanango wanted to fight back against crime. They want to be able to live in a community where they are not scared or frightened by any antisocial behaviour. They want a community in which their children can enjoy freedom and a positive upbringing with positive role models. Unfortunately, assaults on police, as I have mentioned, are a regular occurrence in my electorate.

This bill will honour the memory of police officers such as Detective Senior Constable Damian Leeding, who was killed after responding to an armed robbery on the Gold Coast. This young officer was a married father of two who did not deserve to have his life ended so early. Perhaps this bill will help deter others from committing such shocking acts and perhaps it will help our society to send a clear message

that these types of acts are simply unacceptable within our society. This bill will provide the legislation to help us better protect our community and, most importantly, our front-line workers—the police officers who risk their lives every day to keep us safe.

I know the police officers in my electorate do a superb job and it is pleasing to know that our government has pledged to introduce another 1,100 police officers into the service. However, the punishment for criminals for murdering or seriously assaulting police officers must reflect the high regard in which we hold our police. That is what this bill does. To increase penalties and non-parole periods was one of our election commitments, but also, and more importantly, it reflects the great honour in which our community and our LNP government holds our police. We understand the risks that they take on a day-to-day basis. This new legislation will also encourage more people to join our wonderful Police Service and remain in the field with hopefully less opportunity for them to experience serious crimes against their profession. I commend the bill to the House.