



Speech by

**Jason Costigan**

**MEMBER FOR WHITSUNDAY**

Hansard Tuesday, 31 July 2012

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## **PENALTIES AND SENTENCES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mr COSTIGAN** (Whitsunday—LNP) (8.41 pm): I rise tonight to speak in support of the Penalties and Sentences and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. As we have already heard, this bill delivers on two of the key pre-election pledges made by the Newman LNP government. Firstly, as we have already heard in the House this evening, it will increase the value of the penalty unit under the Penalties and Sentences Act 1992 by 10 per cent, from \$100 to \$110. As has been pointed out by some of my government colleagues, the penalty unit is the base value for most fines and infringement notices. All of us in the community know them simply as tickets. Perhaps if the Labor Party does not like that concept we should issue it with a ticket!

Secondly, this bill will bring in what we have termed an offender levy—a levy which comes into play in criminal justice matters when an offender is found guilty. The amount of the levy for both Supreme Court and District Court matters will be \$300 and for all matters going before a Magistrates Court it will be \$100. I understand that this measure will raise additional revenue of somewhere close to \$23 million in any full financial year. I welcome these new arrangements because they will make sure that offenders contribute to the justice system they have gone before. Not only that, they will address the harm and damage that crimes cause in the community. That latter outcome is something that people who are on the receiving end of crime would surely welcome without qualification. I know that I speak for all government members in the House this evening when I say that we stand shoulder to shoulder in being tough on crime. If you do the crime, you may not do the time but now you will cop an extra fine.

As most members would know, the show circuit is continuing around Queensland at present. Of course, the Ekka is fast approaching. Last weekend the member for Hinchinbrook was at the Tully Show. I think the member for Brisbane Central joined him in that beautiful part of North Queensland. I suspect that this weekend my good friend the member for Mirani will be off to the Sarina Show in between his travels to Proserpine and Airlie Beach for the Whitsunday community cabinet, which I will be delighted to host. At these shows I am sure my colleagues have seen and will see plenty of soft toys. You know the ones, Mr Deputy Speaker Berry—the ones in sideshow alley, the ones that look like Big Ted of *Play School* fame.

**Mr Bleijie:** And those seven clowns where you put the ball in the mouth and they turn their heads.

**Mr COSTIGAN:** I take the interjection of the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice. The clowns will probably be next door to these very soft plush bears. That is the sort of softness we expect from Labor in relation to dealing with people who break the law and do the wrong thing, especially those people who break the law repeatedly.

The Newman LNP government will not be soft on crime. I have no problem with people who are found guilty of an offence helping to pay for things like more police officers on the beat. I am sure there are plenty of members in the House here tonight who can relate to that. I know from my own point of view in the electorate of Whitsunday, in the high-growth corridor of the great city of Mackay and the Northern

Beaches, this is particularly applicable over a long period of time. In fact, my predecessor said in her maiden speech to parliament that there would be a 24/7 police presence on the Northern Beaches. It goes without saying that in more recent times that has not been the case.

I know some of these officers on the Northern Beaches of Mackay. Mr Deputy Speaker Berry, if you join me at the Blacks Beach Tavern this Friday night for a counter meal and maybe a pot or two—

**Mr Hart:** Is that an invitation?

**Mr COSTIGAN:** It could be seen as an invitation not only to Mr Deputy Speaker but also to honourable members—I reckon you might come across one or two of these officers?

**Mr Krause** interjected.

**Mr COSTIGAN:** I will have to ponder that interjection. Thanks very much for that. I have to draw the line somewhere! I reckon you might come across one or two of these officers. Historically, they have been frustrated with the lack of resources on the beat, particularly at that station in the Northern Beaches. I saw this frustration myself during the election campaign, going from pub to pub, town to town, street to street. Pubs are a great melting pot. The people there will tell you straight what is going on. Coppers are no different. They are front-line public servants. Police officers have been crying out for more resources over a long, long period of time under previous Labor administrations that have governed Queensland and run this state into the ground. Putting more coppers on the beat, as we have heard since the election of the Newman LNP government, is something that this government is fiercely committed to—in keeping, I might add, with our pre-election promises.

A great component of this bill is the new provisions relating to the Industrial Relations Act 1999. These provisions will give Queensland Health the capacity to recover any wages overpaid to employees in the future—not the past but the future. The former Bligh Labor government presided over what was possibly, if not probably, the biggest public sector payroll debacle in the history of Western democracies. That is perhaps a big call, but I am happy for anyone to interject and challenge me on that note.

The bill will also assist Queensland Health to make improvements to payroll and rostering processes so that the department and its employees can have confidence in future payment of wages and salaries. Since the new Queensland Health payroll system kicked off back in March 2010 there have been significant issues associated with wage payments to Queensland Health staff. I understand that the majority of system errors have been fixed. I would like to compliment the Minister for Health, who has taken on the onerous task of cleaning up Labor's mess. It is fair to say that new overpayments continue to be generated through the payroll system at an average rate of \$1.7 million every fortnight.

We talk about more police officers on the beat. It is not only police officers but also police resources. I know for a fact after talking to coppers on the beat in places like Cannonvale that the Whitsundays Water Police has the oldest vessel in the water police fleet and services a very significant offshore population. Need I remind honourable members that the Whitsunday islands are very much inhabited. There are two schools, for example, in the Whitsunday islands. The northern most school in my electorate is the Hayman Island State School. There are obviously many businesses on islands such as Hamilton Island and so forth and many visitors, yet it goes without saying that they are crying out for a better deal. If the crooks help sponsor some of these improvements to resources, I say hip hip hooray.

In summary, the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice has done some fine work in putting together this legislation. He is a gentleman who has a wonderful grasp of his portfolio and we are very blessed to have him in this House, and I commend his work.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr COSTIGAN:** I was going to wind down the clock, but—

**Mr Bleijie:** I move that the member be given more time!

**Mr COSTIGAN:** I will disappoint the minister by saying that I do in all honesty look him in the eye and say job well done, Minister. It goes without saying that I commend the bill to the House.