




Speech by

Michael Crandon

MEMBER FOR COOMERA

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PENALTIES AND SENTENCES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr CRANDON** (Coomera—LNP) (4.54 pm): I rise to make a short contribution to the Penalties and Sentences and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. Essentially the objectives of the bill are to increase the value of a penalty unit from \$100 to \$110; introduce a nominal administration fee on criminal justice matters in the Supreme, District and Magistrates courts where an offender is found guilty; address the expiry of certain rules of court; expand the definition of 'relationships' in section 67(7) of the Civil Proceedings Act 2011; and facilitate the recovery of any overpayment and the transition loan paid to employees of Queensland Health or a hospital or health service.

The area I will focus on is the overspend in relation to the Health payroll and the need for us to drag those dollars back. I will also mention the increase in the penalty unit from \$100 to \$110. I note that the last time an increase occurred—from \$75 to \$100—was in 2008 legislation and came into effect in 2009, some three years ago as I have been recently advised. We are now seeing an increase of \$10, taking it up three-and-a-bit per cent per year. From my background in finance and investment, it certainly makes sense for these things to keep pace with inflation, so I am in full agreement. It makes absolute sense.

The argument put forward at the time of the previous increase by the now Leader of the Opposition, criticising the then opposition—talking about increasing the penalty unit from \$75 to \$100—just falls by the wayside when we know that it was a money grab at the time. If those opposite were serious about putting genuine increases in place over time to keep pace with inflation, they would have been addressing it. They would not have left it for nine years. They had their eye off the ball for nine years and they finally came up with this you-beaut idea of increasing the penalty unit from \$75 to \$100 to grab a bit of money. That is the reality of what was happening then. I am in full agreement with the increase in the penalty unit from the user-pays perspective. In a situation like this, the person who creates the problem for society is going to pay compensation to society. That also follows for the levy of \$300 and \$100 respectively, depending on which courts we are talking about, to be charged if an individual is found guilty. If someone is found guilty, they can pay for some of the costs of running our courts. The sum of \$100 or \$300 is not a lot of money in the scheme of things. The member for Broadwater indicated that something in the order of \$22.6 million a year would be generated. It is a small amount to pay in the scheme of things. As I mentioned a minute ago, inflation is what it is all about. Three and a third per cent per annum sounds about right to me.

I do not know whether anyone else had the opportunity to be caught in traffic this morning on the way to parliament as I was. I was listening with interest to the Leader of the Opposition being questioned by Steve Austin. I thought, 'What a coincidence! We are talking about a \$6 million expenditure and here is an interview with Steve Austin, the Six Million Dollar Man.' I thought it was quite ironic that we would end up with the Six Million Dollar Man coming into the fray in state parliament. But Steve Austin was hitting the opposition leader hard about the \$6 million bill. I suppose to build a Steve Austin in this day in age—all those years ago, back in the day when we built Steve Austin, he was the Six Million Dollar Man—with inflation it would cost about \$1.25 billion.

Mr Springborg: Twenty thousand per cent or thereabouts.

Mr CRANDON: A 20,000 per cent increase, is it? I take the interjection from the health minister.

Mr Springborg: Quite extraordinary!

Mr CRANDON: Quite extraordinary. Steve Austin on 612 4QR was a tough interviewer today in that he really did hit the Leader of the Opposition hard on a lot of tough questions. It occurred to me though that if I did not know better I would have almost started to believe what the Leader of the Opposition was saying. If I did not know better—

Mr Crisafulli: But you do know better, though.

Mr CRANDON: But I do know better; I take that interjection. If I did not know better, I would have almost started to believe that the Leader of the Opposition was quite genuine in her insistence that this has nothing to do with her and that it is totally out of her control. She insisted so many times when the Six Million Dollar Man asked her the question. So many times she ducked and dived the answer by telling him that it had nothing to do with her, that it was not her rules, that the rules were made by others and they were managed by the cabinet—

Mr Springborg: The cabinet secretary and she couldn't change them.

Mr CRANDON: Yes, the cabinet secretary and she could not change them. She had no option and no choice and there were no ifs, buts or maybes about it, and she hung in there to the end. I have to say that if I did not know better I would have started to think she was genuine. Given the way she was absolutely lambasted by the Six Million Dollar Man, in the end I would have imagined that she would have had to give in. But she did not and he even came back at her right at the end. He said, 'Okay. If—and he must have had some prior knowledge—the cabinet secretary came to you and said, "If you want to, you can", would you?' And she ducked and dived that one, too. He said, 'If the cabinet secretary says to you, "You can if you want to," would you?' She ducked it and she dived it and she ducked and dived and kept on saying—

Ms TRAD: I rise to a point of order. Mr Deputy Speaker, I ask you to rule on relevance. This has absolutely nothing to do with the bill before the House.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! There is three minutes left and I would assume that the speaker will come back to the topic.

Mr CRANDON: I most certainly will. Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for your direction. I refer to the bill which specifically addresses issues with regard to payments made by Queensland Health to its employees since its new payroll and rostering system went live in March 2010. I think we are accruing about \$1.7 million each fortnight in additional debt, and that came about because of this \$6 million system. I am told that at that time there was the option of running the old system beside the \$6 million system and that that was going to cost \$4 million. I do not know whether that is exactly accurate, but it was going to cost \$4 million to run the old system beside the new system just in case the new system did not work. The Labor government decided to save the \$4 million by not running the old system beside the new system. So here we are now where that \$6 million system, member for South Brisbane, became the \$1.25 billion system—that is, \$1,250 million. We saved \$4 million and we got \$1,250 million as a final payout. That is the relevance of my comments in relation to this matter.

The health minister, however, popped the balloon—popped the Leader of the Opposition's balloon—when he came in here and made it very clear to everyone. I would suspect that the Six Million Dollar Man may have even known that there may have been something in the wind, because the health minister came in and the health minister specifically read the letter to us. At the end of the letter it is stated that the opposition leader has the discretion to decide to release all information unconditionally, and there she was banging away for 20 minutes this morning on 612 4QR with the Six Million Dollar Man talking about—

Ms TRAD: I rise to a point of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: What is your point of order?

Ms TRAD: I ask you to rule on relevance.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member is speaking in relation to the bill and in relation to the recovery of overpayments and therefore is speaking about the payroll system. I find there to be no point of order. Please take your seat.

Mr CRANDON: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. She has discretion to decide to release all information unconditionally, so that little bubble was burst. We came in here today. We now know the truth. Steve Austin—the Six Million Dollar Man—knew the truth this morning. He could not say he knew the truth, but I tell members what: he absolutely nailed her, because she would not admit to anything on the day. I commend this bill by the Attorney-General to the House.