




Speech by

Michael Crandon

MEMBER FOR COOMERA

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CRIMINAL LAW AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr CRANDON** (Coomera—LNP) (3.23 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Criminal Law Amendment Bill 2012.

Mr Elmes: At least it will be intelligent.

Mr CRANDON: Thank you. I take that interjection. In listening to the debate today and last sitting week it brings to my mind the situation that Damian Leeding found himself in. It was mentioned by the member for Morayfield. Damian Leeding was based at Coomera Police Station. What happened to him certainly was quite a shock. I did speak to many of the officers down there. The people in the local community were quite affected by such a heinous crime. It happened some 14 months ago now. We recognised the anniversary of Damian Leeding's passing just a couple of months ago. I thank all members for making the effort and wearing the tie, or the scarf for the lady members, on that particular day. I can report that it was very much appreciated by all members of the police in my electorate who were very taken by the show of solidarity from the whole of the parliament.

It is quite possible that the Damian Leeding tragedy could have been a catalyst for this bill. I am not saying it was. We have to remember that there have been many more through the years and we should remember the suffering all of their families have experienced and will continue to experience at their loss as we go forward. That really brings us to what this bill is all about. The primary objectives of the Criminal Law Amendment Bill 2012 are to amend the Criminal Code to increase the non-parole period for multiple murders from 20 to 30 years imprisonment. It inserts a new minimum non-parole period of 25 years imprisonment for the offence of murder where the victim was a police officer and the offender did the act or omission that caused the police officer's death either when the police officer was performing their duties and the offender knew or ought reasonably to have known that the victim was a police officer; or because the victim was a police officer; or because of, or in retaliation for, actions undertaken by the victim or any other police officer in the performance of their duties.

What we are referring to here is a situation, and I think it is fairly clear, where a police officer, because of their position in society, because of their role in protecting the people of Queensland, is targeted by individuals. We are not talking, as the member for Bundamba was raving on about—it unfortunately became a bit of a rage at the end there—situations where unfortunate things occur. People in all sorts of emergency services lose their life for various reasons. We are talking about criminals who are intentionally targeting police officers; to take them out whilst they are in the performance of their duties. It is a particular type of crime that we are talking about. The bill also increases the maximum penalty for the offence of serious assault of a police officer from seven years imprisonment to 14 years imprisonment where the assault results in an injury amounting to bodily harm involving the spitting on, biting or the application of a bodily fluid or faeces to the police officer or involved the offender being or pretending to be armed with a dangerous or offensive weapon or instrument.

In a nutshell, it sends a clear message to people who think it is funny or smart, if we are talking about urine or faeces or some other bodily fluid, to turn the stomach of society by doing these sorts of things, right the way through to what can be quite serious circumstances where we are perhaps talking

about someone who has the AIDS virus or some other incurable disease and they decide they are going to run the risk of infecting one of those police officers.

This bill sends a clear message. At the moment, the maximum penalty is seven years. After the bill goes through the House, the maximum penalty will be 14 years. The reality is that society demands that we get tough on criminals and that is what this bill is about. As I said, the bill gives the courts more flexibility. It gives them the option of rolling things out to 14 years if someone has made a particularly heinous decision in relation to one of those crimes.

Amongst other things, the bill amends the Corrective Services Act 2006 to increase the non-parole period for murder from 15 years to 20 years imprisonment. Earlier on, the member for Bundamba was ranting on, which is a shame when we are talking about something as serious as this bill. The member suggested that this government was making light of other people's suffering. Certainly that is not the case. We are talking about increasing the penalty from 15 years to 20 years. Under the previous Labor government, for quite some time the minimum non-parole period was 15 years. Now it will be 20 years, 25 years for the murder of a police officer in the performance of their duty and under other circumstances, and 20 to 30 years for multiple murders. We are sending the message that we have had enough and society has had enough.

Importantly, the bill also amends the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000 to introduce a mandatory minimum penalty of \$5,000 and a two-year licence disqualification for the offence of evading police under section 754. Wow! That will certainly turn around the thinking of a few of those guys. Initially, it might not sink in with some of them, because I have to say that some of them have pretty thick skulls and nothing seems to get through to them. However, if they decide to do a bit of hooning and then they do a runner on the coppers, guess what? We will have to knock off only a couple of them by whacking a \$5,000 fine on them and the message will get out that it is not on. The message is, 'If you think it is fun, society has had enough. It is not fun for society to listen to your screeching and the hooning that goes on.' Certainly it is not fun for people in the community to have their lives put at risk by people who perhaps steal a motor vehicle, rob a bank or corner store and then decide to do a runner with police in pursuit and just keep going, going, going.

This legislation will send the message that, in a nutshell, society has had enough. The Attorney-General and the government have heard that message loud and clear. I too have heard it loud and clear from my constituents. Over the past two years, I have been conducting an ongoing survey of my constituents. The survey has a list of 10 items. It is not a push survey. I send out the survey or I hand it out to members of the community at various events and functions. I give them an envelope so that they can return it to me. I ask them to fill in the survey, which takes about a minute and a half. They fill it out, whack it in the envelope and send it back to me. I have been keeping a record of the results over a two-year period. I have found that in excess of 80 per cent of the people in my constituency want policing to be strengthened. They want us to be tougher on criminals and on hoons. They want us to be tougher on those who are making our society not as safe as it should be. I commend the bill to the House.