




Speech by

Michael Pucci

MEMBER FOR LOGAN

Hansard Thursday, 2 August 2012

CRIMINAL LAW AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr PUCCI** (Logan—LNP) (4.52 pm): Today I rise in support of the Criminal Law Amendment Bill, which brings about much-needed change to our Criminal Code. For too long those changes have been passed from one government to another, but today that stops. Today our government, in keeping track with its election promises, is delivering tougher sentencing for violent offenders who commit the most heinous of crimes. This amendment bill establishes a non-parole period of no less than 30 years imprisonment for offenders who commit multiple murders. This bill also brings about a new minimum non-parole period of 25 years for the murder of a Queensland police officer. The bill will ensure that criminals like the murderers of Detective Senior Constable Damian Leeding, Constable Brett Irwin and their fellow officers slain in the course of their duties will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

The Queensland Police Service is on the front line of our communities. Police officers are the guardians of law and order and, time and time again, they go into harm's way to protect and serve our community. As such, sadly there are times when a police officer pays the ultimate sacrifice. At other times they are thrust into dynamic and dangerous situations while dealing with the public. I am so proud to be part of a government that seeks to increase the maximum penalty for a serious assault on a police officer from seven years to 14 years imprisonment, doubling the time an offender will spend in jail. On 26 July I attended a Police Service ceremony where the police officers of the Logan district were presented with medals for 15 years service and up to 30 years service, promotions and so on. It was a great ceremony and they all deserved what they got, but it is not enough. We have to do more for our policemen and women who are out there in harm's way. We have to encourage them to continue to protect and serve. We must honour our Police Service and the men and women who serve with distinction and honour within our community. This amendment bill is a step in the right direction to achieving that very notion.

In my electorate of Logan, like many other electorates across our state, hooning offences are eroding the sanctity of a once tranquil community. Hooning is an offence that goes well beyond individual recklessness. It is an offence that, time and time again, is proving to be a clear and present danger to the safety of our citizens. Our government's tough new legislation to tackle hoons is a commendable step. This amendment bill seeks to support that legislation further by imposing a mandatory penalty of a \$5,000 fine and two-year licence disqualification for offenders who dangerously and recklessly disregard public safety, not only of motorists but also of pedestrians, when they evade police. I reiterate that these are mandatory minimum penalties. It is about time that we start listening to the community and bring these laws up to meet their expectations. When an offender attempts to evade a police pursuit, they risk their lives and the lives of the innocent people around them.

This legislation seeks to provide an alternative to the current police pursuit policy. It seeks to create a safer approach for the community when dealing with dangerous driving on our roads. For too long the penalties imposed on an offender who evaded police was, on average, a mere \$300 fine. In my opinion, that is extremely disproportionate to the real danger that that behaviour poses to our community. This amendment bill establishes a much-needed balance in consequences for such offences and restores accountability within our legal system to punish those who blatantly disregard public safety.

These amendments will ensure that the punishment afforded to an offender meets the severity of the crime. It will take steps for the due process of our court system to restrict such violent offenders from engaging with our community. These new minimum sentences will promote better protection for our Police Service and our community at large. Time and time again, while visiting PCYCs, Neighbourhood Watch groups, crime prevention groups, community action groups and so on, I am told that the punishment never fits the crime. Criminals are getting off too easy. Again I say that we are elected to listen to our communities and the laws should reflect what they want. This is what they want.

This amendment bill seeks to support another election promise of the government, which is the dissolution of the Sentencing Advisory Council. The functions of that council mirror those of the Queensland Law Reform Commission. Therefore, the bill seeks to reduce the red tape and the bureaucratic entanglement that currently exists within the legal system. I am proud to commend this bill to the House. I am proud to take part in this legislative process to restore personal accountability, making our communities safer places. I am proud to be supporting legislation that once again honours the service and the sacrifice of our Police Service. We cannot afford to continue this cycle of lukewarm stances on violent offenders. We cannot let society continue to struggle with the burden of offenders who have been found guilty and convicted of murder, yet receive light sentences. To take a personal life unnecessarily is a grave action. It is one so soulless that it is almost devoid of humanity. Now we have the ability to enforce tougher penalties that properly punish offenders in a manner reflecting their crime.

When an offender sets out to commit a crime, it is not out of desperation. It is not due to the lack of basic entitlements such as clothes and food. It is perpetrated out of a wanton need for destruction, their own personal enjoyment and the desire to inflict pain and loss on hardworking people. It is time that we fight back with strong legislation such as this to protect the very people of our great state who every day put their lives in harm's way for us. Crime will always be an issue in any society. To combat it and to mitigate the appalling impact it has on our community we must provide our police with the right training, the right tools and, most of all, supportive legislation to ensure that justice can be served and that perpetrators are accordingly persecuted under the amended legislation that we put forth today.

This amendment bill does not seek to set down just a heavy response to a violent crime; it seeks to set down a firm deterrent to any would-be offender. Today we send a clear message: 'If you break the law, you will be caught. You will be punished.' To those who commit murder and deprive innocent people of their right to live: 'You will go to jail and you will pay your debt to society and to your victim, more appropriately.'

To be a part of a team that is taking the much needed steps to introduce this amendment bill is something for which I will always hold my head high. I commend the honourable Attorney-General for his tireless efforts bringing about this much needed amendment. The energy of this government is evident by providing the legislative mechanisms for a safer Queensland and it is without a doubt on its way to establishing a safe and brighter future. I therefore commend this bill to the House.