




Speech by

Steve Davies

MEMBER FOR CAPALABA

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CRIMINAL LAW AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr DAVIES** (Capalaba—LNP) (7.45 pm): I rise to commend the Criminal Law Amendment Bill 2012. Firstly, I am very proud to be part of a government that holds law and order in such a high place. I commend the bill to the House and also commend the Attorney-General for having the courage to actually put this bill on paper and bring it before the House. This bill fulfils an LNP promise leading up to the 2012 election in that we said that in our first 100 days we would strengthen the law in Queensland and strengthen law and order. This bill certainly plays a significant part in that along with our 'two strikes and you're out' legislation for repeat sex offenders. The Criminal Law Amendment Bill 2012 seeks to amend the non-parole period for murder from 15 to 20 years, the non-parole period for multiple murders from 20 to 30 years, introduce a 25-year non-parole period for the murder of a policeman, increases from seven years to 14 years the maximum sentence for the assault of a policeman and, finally, brings in a mandatory \$5,000 fine and two-year disqualification of licence for those who seek to evade a police request to pull over in a motor vehicle.

The first issue that I want to talk about relates to the charging of people who commit an offence against a policeman—firstly, murder and then, secondly, assault. These are very significant pieces of legislation. It has been said that a policeman's life is no less important or more important than anybody else's and that maybe having a higher punishment for the murder of a policeman or the assault of a policeman is somehow wrong. That is crazy. Throughout the legal system offenders receive a higher penalty for more serious crimes. A sex assault against a child often receives a higher penalty than a sex assault against an adult. That is not to say that the assault on the adult is any less depraved or any less traumatic, but we acknowledge that that crime against a child is a very serious thing. In the same way, the assault or the worse scenario of the murder of a policeman is a very significant crime.

The newly elected member for Greenslopes, who was once a policeman himself, said that a policeman cannot run away when they are in a situation. They have to stand there. They are the thin blue line. They are the people who keep crime away from us. It is very important that we as a government show police the respect they deserve and the office of a policeman the respect it deserves. In my travels I have had the privilege of meeting a significant number of police officers. One of the things that they often say is that this government shows them a sense of respect and honours their job and that they often felt that that was not the case with the previous government. The police minister said that we have had 1,800 assaults against policemen thus far this year. I would say that that is 1,800 too many. That is just pathetic.

Mr Dowling: Appalling.

Mr DAVIES: It certainly is. As a government we want to provide a real deterrent to committing that offence by imposing not a mandatory sentence, but a maximum sentence of 14 years. That certainly gives the judiciary the opportunity to punish these offenders. We cannot get away from the fact that there is a punitive element to the court system. Often we talk about reforming and rehabilitating criminals. That is true, but we also have to punish them. There is a punitive element to our justice system and a sense of justice that, when people do the wrong thing, they are punished. I believe that people should be punished for assaulting a policeman. I think a maximum of 14 years imprisonment for that is too short.

This bill also amends the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2006 to make it illegal for people to evade police. For that offence they will receive a mandatory \$5,000 fine and a two-year driver's licence disqualification. Some studies have shown that the average fine for evading police was a \$300 fine and that one in five offenders who evaded police were disqualified from driving. That is an absolute disgrace. Michael Barnes in his report recommended tougher penalties as a way to stop this crime being committed. We are doing that. We are a government that is doing what it says and saying what it does.

Finally, I would like to talk about the increase in the punishment for the crime of murder and multiple murders from 15 to 20 years and 20 to 30 years respectively. I am going to get a little bit personal here. My wife likes shoes. She has a real passion for shoes. She is a bit of an Imelda Marcos. But just lately we had a very troubling time with shoes and I think her passion for shoes has died out a little bit. About 2½ years ago my wife went to a gathering of victims of crime. They met at King George Square and pairs of shoes were laid out for every member of a family who was murdered in Queensland. My wife took her father's shoes and laid them out. Her dad was murdered when she was 11 years old. That one incident destroyed her family. Her mum was never the same, her two sisters were never the same and her little brother was never the same. Simone laid out shoes along with about 1,000 other people whose families were dramatically impacted when a loved one was murdered.

Murder is a heinous crime. It has ramifications far beyond just that person being murdered. It has ramifications for the families of those people. For the past 30-odd years—and I am not going to say how many years—my dear wife has struggled with trust. Her dad was a car salesman. He took a man on a test drive and he never came home. Six months later his body was found in Daisy Hill forest. That was such a traumatic thing for her. We often talk about rehabilitation in the criminal justice system, but for my wife a punishment of a non-parole period of 20 years is not enough. My wife and her family received a life sentence. They will never have their daddy back. I think it is really important that we do not forget that the murder of police officers such as Damian Leeding or the murder of members of the public is a horrible, horrible thing.

I commend this bill. I want to congratulate the Attorney-General for the great work he is doing, because I think we need to strengthen our laws. There are victims of crime who will never get justice, because you can never get justice if a loved one is murdered. But they can feel that they have been heard and that their loved one's memory at least has been honoured, not just forgotten about. I commend the bill to the House.