




Speech By  
**Dale Last**

**MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN**

---

Record of Proceedings, 9 May 2017

## **CORRECTIVE SERVICES (PAROLE BOARD) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (3.43 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Corrective Services (Parole Board) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2017. There is no question that the Queensland parole system is in need of review and change. As a former member of the northern regional parole board, I know firsthand the challenges facing our parole boards across Queensland. Before I go any further, I want to pay tribute to Peter McInnes. Peter was largely responsible for me becoming a parole board member and was an invaluable source of support and advice to me throughout my tenure on the board. He was certainly passionate about his role and had a genuine interest in the parole system. He will be sorely missed.

The Sofronoff review of Queensland's parole system, tabled on 1 December 2016, contains a number of significant recommendations for reform of Queensland's parole system. I note that the review recommendations relate to nine broad categories: legislative framework and sentencing; assessment and management of offenders; rehabilitation, mental health and substance misuse treatment; re-entry services; the Parole Board; management of offenders in the community; victims; independent prison and parole inspectorates; and technology and infrastructure. Queenslanders need to have faith and confidence in the parole system. They need to know that their safety is not being compromised by the incorrect or early release of prisoners on parole and that when prisoners are being released on parole appropriate conditions are imposed upon them.

There is a substantial workload associated with being a member of a parole board. It is a complex and difficult job. I know I spent many hours reading parole applications and the workload during my time on the Parole Board escalated to the extent that it was becoming almost a weekly meeting. The creation of a single parole board in Queensland with a number of full-time members makes practical sense, and there is a need to ensure that sufficient numbers of community members are appointed to share the workload and prevent members from being burnt out.

My background as a police officer certainly stood me in good stead as a parole board member. Knowledge of law, probation and parole is a complex issue and I concur with recommendation 44 that a police officer be appointed to the new Parole Board. I also support diversity in membership including gender balance and the need for representation from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

There is an enormous workload associated with undertaking parole board duties and a dedicated secretariat appropriately resourced is imperative for the effective operation of a parole board. I saw the workload of the secretariat in Townsville—it was extraordinary—and the hours that they worked in order to adequately service the parole board in that location. That is an important avenue going forward—that they are appropriately resourced and staffed. Given that some files I read were in excess of 400 pages, there is a need for an efficient system to be put in place that allows parole board members to familiarise themselves with the prisoner's history and behaviour whilst in prison in a timely manner.

There is widespread community concern about prisoners released on parole and there are unfortunately numerous examples of prisoners who have been released on parole who have gone on to commit further offences. I fully support recommendation 60 of the review which identifies the application of GPS monitoring of parole offenders in appropriate circumstances. The residents of our communities need to have confidence that paroled offenders are being appropriately supervised and monitored and, if necessary, returned to prison if they breach their conditions.

I turn to the amendment already foreshadowed by the member for Everton and that is no-body no-parole. I fully support this amendment. I am sure that the overwhelming majority of Queenslanders would support this amendment as well. I note that this is a recommendation of the final report, and it perplexes me that it is not incorporated into the bill before the House. It is bad enough that someone should be killed, but it is completely unacceptable for a prisoner to be considered for parole when they have not disclosed the location of the deceased person. The deceased person's family not only have to live with the loss of a loved one but also have to live with the fact that they are unable to conduct a proper funeral to give them closure. There is no question in my mind that prisoners imprisoned for the offences of murder and manslaughter should not be considered for parole if they have failed to disclose the location of the body and satisfactorily cooperated in the investigation of the offence.

The assessment and management of prisoners, rehabilitation and the management of offenders in the community are complex issues. We need a professional and appropriately resourced parole board to undertake this important role. The establishment of a centralised, independent and transparent parole board will give Queenslanders the certainty they need that our prisoners are being managed in an appropriate manner.