



Speech By  
**Hon. Mark Ryan**

**MEMBER FOR MORAYFIELD**

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

### **Introduction**

 **Hon. MT RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services and Minister for Corrective Services) (3.00 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Corrective Services Act 2006, the Judges (Pensions and Long Leave) Act 1957, the Parole Orders (Transfer) Act 1984 and the acts mentioned in schedule 1 for particular purposes. I table the bill and the explanatory notes. I nominate the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee to consider the bill.

*Tabled paper:* Corrective Services (Parole Board) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2017 [\[207\]](#).

*Tabled paper:* Corrective Services (Parole Board) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2017, explanatory notes [\[208\]](#).

It is a great pleasure to rise in this House today to introduce the Corrective Services (Parole Board) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2017, which will establish the new Parole Board Queensland, implementing several key recommendations made by Mr Walter Sofronoff QC in the Queensland Parole System Review report. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mr Sofronoff for undertaking this important review following the tragic death of Ms Elizabeth 'Beth' Kippen in Townsville in July 2016. The man charged was a paroled offender.

The effectiveness of the parole process is fundamental to the integrity of Queensland's corrective services system. The Palaszczuk government is absolutely committed to ensuring that Queensland has a parole system that effectively manages prisoners released into the community and protects the community now and into the future. It is this commitment and focus that led to Mr Sofronoff being tasked with undertaking a review of the current parole system in Queensland.

On 1 December 2016, Mr Sofronoff delivered his report to the government, making 91 recommendations for wide-sweeping legislative, operational and administrative changes to Queensland's parole system. The review report provides a comprehensive blueprint for reform. The findings in the report, which was tabled today by the Premier and Minister for the Arts, is the result of the most up-to-date research, contemporary practice in other jurisdictions and wideranging consultation with experts in the field of criminology. This bill focuses on two core areas of reform recommended in the report—reform of the Queensland parole board system and expansion of GPS monitoring to parolees.

The report found that there were systemic deficiencies in the operation of the three existing parole boards in Queensland. Board decision-making appeared to be unstructured and not always approached by the whole board on an informed basis. Mr Sofronoff observed that material provided to the parole boards in advance of meetings was typically voluminous, unstructured, unindexed and compiled without careful consideration as to what information was necessary for the board in making its decisions. The report concluded that the present parole system in Queensland can be substantially improved.

Mr Sofronoff recommended that, to ensure the safety of the community and the proper and efficient operation of the parole system in Queensland, the parole board must be modernised and professionalised. This bill delivers on that vision.

As recommended in the report, the bill provides for a single, professionalised parole board that operates independently to hear all applications for board ordered parole in Queensland. The new Parole Board will retain the same powers and functions as currently provided under the Corrective Services Act. However, as recommended, the bill makes significant changes to the membership, composition, structure and operations of the new Parole Board Queensland. This new board will supplant the three existing parole boards. Whilst this means the current board members' existing appointments will end upon commencement of the bill, the current board members will be able to apply to be a member of the new board.

As recommended in the report, the new board will be led by a full-time president and at least one full-time deputy president. It will also comprise at least two full-time professional members who may be drawn from a diversity of backgrounds and whose university or professional qualifications are relevant to the functions of the Parole Board, including lawyers, medical practitioners and psychiatrists. The bill provides that appointments to each of these positions will be made by the Governor in Council, upon the recommendation of the minister. For the president and deputy president, the minister must consult with the relevant parliamentary committee about the proposed appointment and, for the professional members, the minister must consult with the president of the Parole Board Queensland.

Consistent with the recommendations in the report, the bill provides that the president and deputy president must be a former judge of a state or federal court. The bill also enables the minister to recommend a person for president who has the qualifications, experience or standing considered equivalent to that of a judge of a state or federal court. The deputy president can also be a former magistrate.

In recognition of the significance and stature of these new roles and to ensure the recruitment of high-calibre appointees, the salaries, allowances and entitlements of the president and deputy president will be based on those of a Supreme Court judge and District Court judge, respectively, and both positions will have a pension entitlement similar but not identical to that of a Supreme Court or District Court judge respectively. This approach to remuneration and pension entitlement is consistent with the approach already taken regarding the Chairperson of the Crime and Corruption Commission, noting also that the entitlements of the Chairperson of the Crime and Corruption Commission is akin to a Supreme Court judge.

As recommended, the new board will comprise at least one police representative and at least one Public Service representative who has expertise or experience in probation and parole matters. As recommended in the report, the Queensland community will also be represented on the board in the form of community board members who will be appointed by the Governor in Council on the recommendation of the minister and on the terms and conditions set out in the instrument of appointment. The community members may be part-time or full-time. Crucially, as recommended in the report, the bill emphasises the need to ensure appropriate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and for balanced gender representation in the membership of the new Parole Board.

As recommended in the report, the bill makes express provision for the new Parole Board to be supported by a dedicated secretariat, whose role will be to support the board in the performance of its functions. These officers will be Public Service employees.

As was emphasised by Mr Sofronoff, the bill draws a distinction between parole meetings involving decision-making about a prisoner incarcerated for a serious violent offence or a serious sexual offence, as compared to all other prisoners. For this serious category of offenders, the bill, as recommended in the report, mandates that the board must comprise at least five members and those sitting at the meetings must include: the president or deputy president, a professional board member, a community board member, a Public Service representative and a police representative. For all other cases, the board must comprise three members, consisting of at least one professional member, one community member and one other member.

Included in the bill are the necessary arrangements to ensure the smooth transition from the current parole board process to the new one. These arrangements will ensure that community safety is not compromised throughout this transitional period. Recommendation 60 of the report states—

Queensland Corrective Services' GPS tracking capabilities should be developed so that it is possible for the parole board to require GPS tracking and monitoring in appropriate circumstances based on the assessed risk of each parolee.

The bill, accordingly, includes technical and clarifying amendments to ensure that Queensland Corrective Services officers have the ability and resources to monitor the location and restrict the movements of a prisoner subject to parole—that is, a prisoner subject to either court ordered parole or board ordered parole. Electronic monitoring provides another valuable tool for Corrective Services to manage, administer and monitor parolees. The community can be assured that, where applicable, at any given time, Corrective Services staff will be in a position to monitor parolees and react to situations as they arise.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge the tireless work conducted by Mr Peter McInnes, President of the Queensland Parole Board, parole board members, the secretariat, custodial officers, probation and parole officers, and staff from Queensland Corrective Services. I would particularly like to acknowledge Commissioner Mark Rallings, Deputy Commissioner Kerrith McDermott, Selina Shea, John Forster, Kate Petrie and Tom Humphreys from Queensland Corrective Services. I would also like to acknowledge David Mackie, Leanne Robertson and Carolyn McAnally for their commitment to helping keep Queenslanders safe and for their role in helping to deliver this reform for the people of Queensland.

Although this bill is called the Corrective Services (Parole Board) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2017, given what has happened and where we are today, I think it appropriate that always in our hearts and minds we refer to this law as 'Beth's Law'. I commend the bill to the House.

### **First Reading**

**Hon. MT RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services and Minister for Corrective Services) (3.12 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Question put—That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

### **Referral to the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee**

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Crawford): Order! In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee.

### **Portfolio Committee, Reporting Date**

**Hon. MT RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services and Minister for Corrective Services) (3.12 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—

That under the provisions of standing order 136 the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee report to the House on the Corrective Services (Parole Board) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill by 28 April 2017.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.