



Speech By  
**Hon. Mark Ryan**


**MEMBER FOR MORAYFIELD**

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Record of Proceedings, 9 May 2017

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

**Second Reading**

 **Hon. MT RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services and Minister for Corrective Services) (2.30 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

Before I speak to the bill I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the former Parole Board president, Peter McInnes, who sadly passed away last month after a long illness. Peter will be remembered as a passionate Parole Board president who constantly strived for improvement. For over 15 years Peter demonstrated commitment to his community as a deputy president and then president of the Queensland Parole Boards as well as his work with a number of charitable foundations. His dedication and strong work ethic were pivotal during his tenure. I extend my deepest sympathies to Peter's partner, Robyn, family and friends.

On 16 February 2017 the Corrective Services (Parole Board) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2017 was introduced into the parliament. The parliament referred the bill to the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee for consideration and requested the committee to report on its consideration of the bill by 28 February 2017. The committee tabled Report No. 53 and made one recommendation: that the Corrective Services (Parole Board) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2017 be passed. I thank the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee for its timely consideration of the bill, and I acknowledge the efforts of the members of that committee and their work in respect of that consideration.

The bill before the House implements key recommendations made by the now President of the Court of Appeal, Mr Walter Sofronoff QC, in his report titled *Queensland Parole System Review*. As most members of this House know, the review of the Queensland parole system was instigated following the killing of Mrs Elizabeth 'Beth' Kippin in Townsville in July 2016. The man charged with this heinous offence was on parole. On 1 December 2016 the Sofronoff review was delivered, making 91 recommendations for sweeping legislative, operational and administrative changes to the Queensland parole system and providing a blueprint for reform. The Palaszczuk government supports or supports in principle 89 of the 91 recommendations, demonstrating its commitment to ensuring that Queensland's parole system is robust and rigorous when it comes to community safety and protecting our residents from repeat offenders.

The bill implements two key initiatives flowing from the Sofronoff review: the establishment of a new parole board system and the strengthening of GPS monitoring for parolees. The review found that the current parole board system is inefficient due to the simultaneous operation of three parole boards, the absence of full-time board members and inadequate administrative processes to support

decision-making. I would like to acknowledge that these findings do not reflect on the ability or dedication of the current Parole Board members, but rather highlights that the current system is antiquated and unable to cope with the increasing demand on its time and resources.

In accordance with the Sofronoff review, the bill address these issues by the dissolution of the three existing parole boards and the establishment of a single professionalised new board known as Parole Board Queensland. This new board will be the sole decision-making entity regarding parole in Queensland other than the imposition of court ordered parole. As recommended in the review, the new Parole Board will have a professionalised membership, including a full-time president and at least one full-time deputy president who are either former judicial officers or have the equivalent qualifications and experience of judicial officers. The Parole Board will have a minimum of two full-time dedicated professional members with professional qualifications relevant to the functions of the Parole Board including, but not limited to, legal or medical qualifications. The board will also be comprised of at least one police representative and at least one Public Service representative who has expertise or experience in probation and parole matters. Crucially, the Queensland community will also be represented on the new Parole Board in the form of community board members to be appointed by the Governor in Council on the recommendation of the minister with portfolio responsibilities for the Corrective Services Act.

The fresh composition of the new Parole Board Queensland recognises the need for professional and committed members who are dedicated to performing the vital function of parole decision-making—a focus which is in itself a full-time job. The bill emphasises balanced representation on the new board by ensuring representation of women and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. A dedicated secretariat staffed by Public Service employees will support the new Parole Board in the performance of its important functions.

Following the review's recommendation, the bill provides for a five-member quorum when presiding on matters regarding prisoners incarcerated for serious violent offences or serious sexual offences and for certain other prescribed prisoners. For these prisoners the bill—subject to some amendments that I intend to move during the consideration in detail stage of the debate, which I understand have already been circulated to members of the House—mandates that the membership be comprised of the president or the deputy president, a professional board member, a community board member, a Public Service representative and a police representative when considering an application for parole or the cancellation of a parole order. For meetings relating to all other matters the bill requires a quorum of three members, and the precise composition of the board will be dictated by the type of prisoner and the nature of the matter to be decided.

The new Parole Board Queensland is a cornerstone of the improved parole system in Queensland and marks a new era in the way that parole applications are considered. This new professionalised body represents the government's commitment to keeping Queenslanders safe. The Sofronoff review identified that the application of GPS monitoring to certain paroled offenders could assist in improving the safe reintegration of parolees into the community and a reduction in reoffending. The bill implements this representation by making a clarifying amendment to the Corrective Services Act to ensure that a corrective services officer may give a direction to a paroled prisoner to remain at a stated place for stated periods, wear a GPS monitoring device and permit the installation of a device or equipment at the place where the paroled prisoner resides. In addition to the newly structured Parole Board, this power to require the wearing of GPS monitoring devices clearly highlights that this is a new way of doing business and a tough, stricter approach to protecting Queenslanders.

At this time I would like to foreshadow that I will also be moving some amendments to the bill during the consideration in detail stage of the debate. Again I note that these amendments have already been circulated to members of the House. These amendments will improve the operational efficiency of the new Parole Board Queensland and remain consistent with the review's fundamental vision of a professionalised single parole board employing high-calibre members, assuring that well-informed decision-making occurs on all matters relating to board ordered parole. These amendments have been circulated in my name and will ensure the efficient operation of the new Parole Board Queensland.

In particular, it is proposed to admit and replace new section 234—which concerns meetings about particular matters relating to parole orders as inserted into the Corrective Services Act under clause 12 of the bill—to enable a more efficient and effective use of the Parole Board's resources and its composition.

New section 234 as amended will provide that the Parole Board sitting as five members must consider all applications for a parole order or the cancellation of a parole order for a prescribed prisoner; the Parole Board sitting as three members comprised of the president or deputy president, a professional member and a community member must consider all suspensions of a parole order for a

prescribed prisoner; and the Parole Board sitting as three members comprised of a professional board member, a community board member and at least one other member can consider an amendment of a parole order for a prisoner, whether a prescribed prisoner or otherwise. The safeguard is that an amended application will not result in the cancellation or suspension of a parole order. The prisoner in these circumstances will already be on parole and the issue for consideration will be the addition or modification of existing conditions. The Parole Board sitting as three members comprised of a professional board member, a community board member and at least one other member is to consider the applications for parole and the suspension or cancellation of a parole order relating to all other prisoners.

Additionally, the definition of 'prescribed prisoner' under section 234 is to be amended to add a person imprisoned for the offence of choking, suffocation or strangulation in a domestic setting under section 315A of the Criminal Code. In this regard, I would like to particularly thank the Gold Coast Centre Against Sexual Violence Inc. for its submission to the committee about the bill, as its submission formed the impetus for the inclusion of this amendment.

This is important reform for Queensland. It brings our parole system into the 21st century. It is good reform that will keep Queenslanders safe and I encourage all members of the House to support it. I commend the bill to the House.