




Speech By
Hon. Mark Ryan

MEMBER FOR MORAYFIELD

Record of Proceedings, 23 May 2017

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

 **Hon. MT RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services and Minister for Corrective Services) (3.00 pm), in reply: I would like to take this opportunity to thank honourable members of this House for their contributions to the debate on the Corrective Services (Parole Board) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2017. I am very proud to be part of the formulation of this bill, which will be instrumental in strengthening the safety of all Queenslanders.

By accepting 89 of the 91 recommendations in the Sofronoff review, the Palaszczuk government is committed to these sweeping reforms, which will ensure that Queensland's parole system operates as effectively as possible to ensure community safety. As part of our commitment to reform the probation and parole system, we have dedicated an additional \$265 million over six years. Included in this package of reforms will be an increase in the number and diversity of rehabilitation programs, including drug and alcohol strategies and education courses which are designed to reduce recidivism and keep Queenslanders safe.

This bill delivers on the review's key recommendations through the establishment of a single body to determine parole matters in Queensland with the exception of the imposition of court ordered parole. The new Parole Board Queensland replaces the three boards that currently operate in Queensland: the Queensland Parole Board and two other regional boards. The new Parole Board Queensland will be led by a full-time president and two full-time deputy presidents. The people who are appointed to these key positions will be former judicial officers or will have the qualifications, experience or standing equivalent to a judicial officer. Full-time professional board members will be drawn from diverse backgrounds and have university or professional qualifications relevant to the functions of the Parole Board. As well as police and Public Service representatives, the Queensland community will be represented by community board members. The calibre and diversity of membership on the new board is true to the vision of the Sofronoff view of a professionalised single parole board which employs rigorous and well-informed decision-making on parole matters. The bill ensures balanced gender membership and the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on the Parole Board.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as I said in my second reading speech, the bill also provides greater scope for Corrective Services officers to monitor paroled prisoners via electronic devices. The bill strengthens existing powers to monitor paroled prisoners by empowering Corrective Services officers to give a direction to a paroled prisoner to remain at a stated place for stated periods, to wear a GPS monitoring device and to permit the installation of a device or equipment at the place where the released prisoner resides.

I will now take this opportunity to address some of the remarks made by members opposite during the course of this debate. During the debate we heard a claim that there was a plan by those opposite to build 650 beds in correctional centres in Queensland. I am pleased to say that once Borallon is fully commissioned in a way that is safe for prisoners over 650 additional beds in our correctional centres

will have been delivered over the last few years. In addition, we recently announced a \$200 million, 164-bed expansion of the Capricornia Correctional Centre which will ensure that we have additional capacity in our prisons.

We go beyond expanding infrastructure capacity in Queensland and we look at restoring the diversion programs and diversionary courts that those opposite cut when they were in government. When you talk about prison capacity it is not just about infrastructure: it is about diversion programs, rehabilitation programs and reducing recidivism, because when you rehabilitate people, when you reduce recidivism and reduce reoffending, you create a safer community. This government is very proud to be restoring the Murri Court, the Drug Court and the Special Circumstances Court and we are investing in those programs in our prisons. We have followed that up with real money—\$265 million over six years—and this will make a real difference to the safety of the people of Queensland because it will reduce recidivism, it will reduce reoffending, it will lead to reduced crime and it will ensure that Queenslanders are safe.

I am very, very proud of not only this package of reforms but the legislation and the infrastructure expansion that we are continuing to roll out. I would like to reinforce that our government has a plan not only in the short term but also the medium and long term to continue to expand prison infrastructure and invest in measures that help keep Queenslanders safe.

It is important to note that the new Parole Board Queensland will include representatives from regional and remote communities. This bill provides that, when a person is recommended to the Governor in Council for appointment as a board member, regard must be had to providing for balanced gender representation and the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on the board. Moreover, when a person is appointed as a community board member or a professional board member, the bill expressly provides that regard must also be had to ensuring that the Parole Board represents the diversity of the Queensland community. I know that in their contributions a number of members requested feedback with regard to ensuring that regional representation was a consideration with respect to the diversity of the constitution of the Parole Board Queensland.

I would also like to point out to members of this House that, importantly, a professional member is not limited to a person with legal qualifications but rather relates to a person who has a university or professional qualification which is relevant to the functions of the Parole Board. These requirements will ensure that the new Parole Board will be comprised of a variety of people with a variety of experiences and be representative of all communities in Queensland.

When this bill was introduced I highlighted the importance of fundamental reform following the release of the Sofronoff review and the restructuring of the new Parole Board Queensland. This bill will bring our probation and parole system into the 21st century. It will have a big impact on the safety of Queenslanders. It will ensure that we have a single professionalised streamlined Parole Board Queensland which will contribute overall not only to the operation of our parole system in Queensland but also to the safety of Queenslanders. I encourage all members to support the bill. I commend the bill to the House.