




Speech By  
**Scott Stewart**

**MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE**

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Record of Proceedings, 9 May 2017

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

 **Mr STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (3.57 pm): I doubt if anyone living in Townsville will ever forget that fateful day on Wednesday, 27 July 2016 when Townsville police discovered the tragedy that was the murder of beloved mother, grandmother and aunty Beth Kippin. Beth was murdered by a man who had only just been released from Stuart prison that same day. From that tragedy has come the changes to the parole system that we have with us today and that we debate in this House.

While it will never console the Kippin family for the loss of their matriarch, it will, however, forever change the way parole is managed across Queensland. This bill focuses on two core areas of reform recommended in the report—reform to the Queensland parole board system and expansion of GPS monitoring to parolees. The report from Mr Sofronoff found that there were deficiencies across the system in the operation of three existing parole boards in Queensland. 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. To achieve this end, three parole boards must become one and have a consistent parole approach across the state. It would be an independent entity and be able to conduct its business as it sees appropriate.

Perhaps one of those more appealing aspects of the bill is the opportunity for those on parole to be fitted with GPS tracking bracelets in those circumstances where it may be deemed necessary. From Mr Sofronoff's review, recommendation 60 of the parole review report proposed that Queensland Corrective Services develop GPS tracking capabilities so that it is possible for the Parole Board Queensland to require GPS tracking and monitoring in appropriate circumstances on assessed risk of each parolee. Consistent with this recommendation, the bill makes a technical and clarifying amendment to the act to ensure QCS officers can monitor parolees via electronic devices.

Had Beth Kippin's murderer been wearing a GPS tracking device when he had been released from prison, would police have been able to intervene and prevent the most horrific of situations? We will never know. What we do know is that the amendment of this legislation may prevent future atrocities similar to Beth's. The use of GPS tracking bracelets is not new and the Department of Justice and Attorney-General noted in that response to the committee that GPS monitoring is already used in Queensland Corrective Services as part of a range of case management options to reduce the likelihood of reoffending including programs to reintegrate offenders, programs to address offending behaviour, supervision and substance testing.

In their submission to the committee, the Queensland Homicide Victims' Support Group also considered that victims of crime should be alerted when the perpetrator of that crime is about to be released on parole wearing a GPS device 'for the simple fact that it then allows the person to protect themselves if that is deemed necessary'. They also said—

... in those cases where the families know and have a very real fear that they are in danger, giving them the opportunity to respond to that and to remove themselves from the situation, a warning, just time—even an hour or 24 hours sometimes is enough—to remove yourself from the vicinity of the perpetrator.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the Kippin family: Beth's son, Wayne Kippin, and daughter, Terrie Ward, and their families as well as prominent Townsville business community member and nephew Dave Kippin. My heartfelt prayers go out to each and every one of you. I could never imagine what they went through following Beth's murder at the hands of the beast, but know this: Beth's life touched many and made many people's lives better. Today her life will change Queensland's history for the better. I commend the bill to the House.