




Speech By  
**Andrew Powell**

**MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE**

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Record of Proceedings, 18 September 2018

**POLICE POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AND OTHER LEGISLATION  
AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (4.25 pm): I rise to also address the Police Powers and Responsibilities and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018. From the outset I state that the objective of the bill is detailed as ‘enhancing the efficiency and quality of front-line policing services’ and ‘ensuring that policing services remain responsive to contemporary community needs’. The bill makes a number of amendments to various pieces of legislation, specifically the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000. At the outset, as many other speakers have mentioned, the LNP supports this bill as it stands unamended. I will come to the amendments that are being proposed a little later on.

What I do have concerns about—and I am not going to go into the forensic analysis of the bill as the previous speaker, the member for Burdekin, has detailed his personal experience as a serving police officer. I would refer my constituents to his contribution for the specific aspects of this bill. What flows out of those specific changes are practical impacts that could see increased police powers lead to an ever greater lack of police officers and police resources which are increasingly required. While these increased police powers are commendable at face value, it will be difficult to deliver on these proposed changes when Labor have constantly and continually underfunded and underresourced the Queensland Police Service. I would point out that when the LNP was in government we got to a position through increased resourcing, increased police officers on the beat, where we had 245 officers per 100,000—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr McArdle): Members, again, the level of audible conversation is increasing. Please keep it down or take it outside.

**Mr POWELL:** We got to a point where there were 245 police officers for every 100,000 people in the state of Queensland. Sadly, since the Palaszczuk government came to power, what we have seen is a diminution of funding for the police with respect to population growth, with respect to per capita funding, to the point where now, 4½ years later, we are looking at 242 police officers per 100,000 head of population.

**Mr Minnikin:** A cut in services.

**Mr POWELL:** It is a cut in services, a cut in front-line services. Despite all the rhetoric of those opposite, we see a very real situation where front-line police officers are being pushed into a situation where they are unable to service the growing community needs, which as I read in the objective, this bill sets out to achieve. For the benefit of the members in the House today let me give a local example of this.

The electorate of Glass House is admirably serviced by a number of local police stations as well as some larger regional centres just outside of the electorate. What we are seeing through increased population growth, particularly in the railway towns of the Sunshine Coast and Moreton Bay hinterland, is the fact that existing serviced stations are unable to cope with the increasing amount of crime and the increasing size of the population.

During my last round of mobile offices, particularly in the stretch between Beerburrum and Mooloolah Valley—places like Beerburrum, Glass House Mountains, Beerwah, Landsborough and Mooloolah Valley—we heard very clearly that police response times are on the decline. Let me say at the outset that this is no reflection on the quality of work and the efforts of people like Acting Senior Sergeant Tully Anderson and his team at the Beerwah Police Station. They do a fine job and I support them in everything they do, but the list of responsibilities that this local station has—yes, it is a fully-operational 24-hour police station with some 24 FTEs, but they cover a stretch from Beerburrum to Mooloolah Valley. They also take in the Bruce Highway, and anyone who has driven that stretch on the Bruce Highway between Beerburrum and Beerwah lately will know there are a stack of roadworks going on, so that takes a number of police officers and police cars away from regular duties. We have had a number of very successful operational task forces on the Sunshine Coast, but again allocations are taken from existing policing resources rather than new allocations being given, so that impacts on the ability of the local station to provide quick and prompt service to the community.

When this was raised with me I took the liberty of writing to the minister to raise my concerns. I have heard others in this House, including the member for Thuringowa, raise their concerns specifically with the minister. I was hoping for a little bit of positive news for the community and that we might see an increase in staffing at the Beerwah Police Station in particular. Unfortunately, no. The minister replied—

I am advised that Beerwah Police Station is a 24 hour operational police station and is resourced accordingly to meet the demands for service by the community. A flexible and agile approach in meeting the needs of the community is in place across the Sunshine Coast District, including the deployment of members from neighbouring divisions and specialist police when required.

The allocation of resources is an operational decision made by the Commissioner of Police, following a detailed assessment of area growth—

**Mr Ryan:** That is true.

**Mr POWELL:** I take that interjection from the minister. I very much accept it is an operational decision for the Commissioner of Police. The minister continued—

safety issues and any new or emerging issues. The Police Commissioner makes this decision, free of any political interference, which is as it should be. This also ensures a fair and equitable service is provided across the state.

On that note, I do hope there is a fair and equitable provision of services across the state, because on a number of occasions I have listened to the member for Thuringowa in particular lambaste the minister for not providing more services to Thuringowa and talking about petitions being underfoot. Then, lo and behold, we see that extra resources are put into Thuringowa. There is good news: we have launched a petition in Glass House calling for exactly the same additional resources—

**Mrs D'ATH:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Stewart): I think I can pre-empt what you are going to say, Attorney-General.

**Mrs D'ATH:** Relevance.

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! You need to be in your chair if you are going to make a comment, member; you know that. Member for Glass House, can I bring you back to the long title of the bill.

**Mr POWELL:** I am very happy to. I again refer to one of the objectives of the bill, which is to ensure that policing services remain responsive to contemporary community needs. Like the residents of Thuringowa who rightly asked the minister for additional staffing, the petition that has been launched in Glass House calls on this government and this minister to ensure there are additional resources provided to our police officers in Glass House, the Sunshine Coast and the Moreton Bay hinterland to address community needs.

Whilst the proposed legislation here will go some way to improving the ability of police officers to be more flexible and agile, there are concerns—as was raised during the committee hearing—that it may mean we have fewer resources, particularly when considering we are underfunded. I look forward to hearing the minister's response when the petition is tabled, and I am looking forward to as positive a response as the member for Thuringowa received.

As I conclude my contribution today I want to turn to the amendments that have been tabled by the Minister for Police. I want to reflect on the fact that the priority of all members in this House, but particularly the government, should be to keep its citizens safe. We have all known there were pending outcomes in terms of an appeal around the release of notorious repeat sex offender Robert John Fardon. What we do know is that until the LNP prodded and poked them, those opposite had no plan B. When they opened up the *Courier-Mail* on Sunday morning and saw that the LNP had prepared a bill in consultation with a range of stakeholders which we knew would stack up and deliver safety for

the citizens of Queensland, what happened? There was a little kitchen cabinet. They sat around the cabinet table—the Attorney-General’s kitchen—and thought, ‘We’d better come up with something here.’

Despite the efforts of the LNP to put this bill to the House, send it off to a committee and pass it this week, we did not succeed. What we are debating this afternoon is Labor’s bill and Labor’s amendment. Quite frankly, they do not stack up. They do not deliver the community safety that Queenslanders rightly deserve. They claim to deliver one thing when in reality they deliver the opposite. There is no ‘tough on crime’ here. There is a whole lot of tough talk, but in reality the amendments being proposed by the Minister for Police are soft. They do not guarantee that repeat sex offenders like those mentioned will be monitored and supervised constantly until their dying day. That, quite frankly, is unacceptable. The government should know better. The government should do better, and if they need something to run off we are happy to provide them with our bill.