




Speech By
Michael Berkman

MEMBER FOR MAIWAR

Record of Proceedings, 18 September 2018

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

 **Mr BERKMAN** (Maiwar—Grn) (8.14 pm): I rise to make a brief contribution on the Police Powers and Responsibilities and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. Broadly speaking, I do support the bill and the amendments that were circulated this morning to the extent that I understand them. I do have some concerns about the process for introduction of the amendments, the very short time frames for consideration and the absence of any committee scrutiny for these amendments.

I think every member would agree that committee processes are essential for the purpose of bringing expert evidence to bear and scrutinising legislation that we are supposed to consider and vote on. Not all would agree with me about the need for urgent reform to improve those processes so that we have more robust processes and better scrutiny of legislation. Wishful thinking aside, these amendments have had no such consideration.

I do not think anyone here would claim to have sufficient expertise to substitute for the role that the committees play or for the expert input that the committee process brings. I am genuinely concerned about this as a precedent. I know it is not the first time it has happened, but it sets a terrible precedent. It is bad practice, it is bad legislative practice, it is bad for public confidence in the system and it is bad generally for democracy.

I did have the privilege this morning of being briefed by the Attorney-General and her staff, and I do very much appreciate that. I do not have any grave concerns about the content of these amendments. All legislation that we deal with in this place affects the rights and responsibilities and liberties of Queenslanders. I think we have to ask ourselves: where do we draw the line on this kind of practice? What will it be next time? It might not necessarily be with this government; it might be with a new government. Will we be passing last-minute amendments to legislate against bikies or will it be Muslims or will it be to crack down on unions or trans kids in schools? What are we going to be dealing with without that scrutiny next time around?

In the current debate and the relatively limited time that we will obviously have from this point, it also reflects poorly on the recent changes to the sessional orders and the Business Committee process that has been introduced. I made my concerns clear in the debate on that motion about the risks around losing time to debate amendments in consideration in detail, and it appears that those concerns are going to play out this evening.

My contribution here is not a criticism of the work that has gone on behind the scenes to introduce these amendments. As I said, I do support them, but it is incumbent upon all of us here not just to focus on the content of the legislation that we deal with, not just to focus on the purpose and the outcomes that we seek but also to focus on the process and to ensure that it is robust and that people can have confidence in the processes that we are applying here.