




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

 **Mr MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (5.44 pm): I, too, rise to contribute to the debate on the Police Powers and Responsibilities and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018. So much for openness and transparency espoused by the Premier when we have seen yet again debate being stifled in this chamber. The opposition leader tried to move amendments to this bill earlier today, but the Palaszczuk government has today refused to allow the LNP's tough laws to protect Queenslanders from all violent serious sex offenders to even be debated by parliament in cognate.

While blocking debate, the panicking Palaszczuk government said it would press ahead with its own weak legislation, which will rely on offenders to—get this—'self-report' to police on release. What a joke. I will speak further about the amendments that have been introduced later in my contribution. I would now like to comment on the original bill briefly which, in fact, was sent to a committee for scrutiny and a fine toothcomb vetting process.

The LNP's position on that particular bill was unequivocally not to oppose—that is, the original bill, prior to these rushed in amendments. The committee, as other members have spoken about today, made one recommendation, and that was that the original bill be passed. There was no statement of reservation provided on the original bill.

The objectives of that bill were aimed at enhancing the efficiency and quality of front-line police services and ensuring that policing services remained responsive to contemporary community needs. The bill made a number of amendments to various pieces of legislation, specifically the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000. There was a divide—and there always is a divide and a balancing act—between protecting the rights and liberties of individuals who are subject to the proposed changes and enhancing the powers of police to enable them to conduct their work as efficiently and professionally as possible.

In relation to specific details, the original bill—I will come back to the amendments—made a number of amendments to the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000, the PPRA, the Police Powers and Responsibilities Regulation 2012 and the Corrective Services Act 2006, as well as amendments to other acts including the Child Protection (Offender Reporting and Offender Prohibition Order) Act 2004.

Of all of these, the most significant proposed amendments included introducing a new framework to assist police in missing person investigations and proposing that the crime scene threshold offence be reduced to an indictable offence with a maximum penalty of at least four years imprisonment instead of the current prescribed seven years imprisonment. Furthermore, police may apply for a judicial order requiring an access approval order for a locked storage device that has been seized under a crime scene warrant. Other amendments included further changes to the parole system. New offences, such as the offence for assaulting or obstructing a civilian watch-house officer, as well as separating the offence of assaulting or obstructing a police officer into two distinct offences, were also to be introduced.

I would now like to comment further on the amendments introduced into the House today that have not been referred to a committee. As other speakers have said previously—and I reiterate—surely the priority of all governments is to keep its citizens safe. That should be a fundamental priority of all governments. There is, however, a big difference between ‘could’ and ‘shall’ when framing legislation. Labor has been caught out yet again with the pending unsupervised release of one of this state’s worst serial offenders. What a travesty to the people of Queensland to have essentially something akin to an honesty system with some of the state’s worst serial sexual predators.

What is clear is that Labor had no plan B in place and were staking all their hopes on a successful appeal by the Attorney-General to the impending release of notorious repeat sexual offender Robert John Fardon when his supervision order expires on 3 October. That is obvious given the rushed and, as other speakers have said—and I agree with them—cobbled together amendments. In fact, there are only two amendments that Labor are proposing to add to the substantive bill. The Attorney-General claims that Labor’s amendments are not Fardon specific, yet they are being rushed through as part of this bill and have not even been to a parliamentary committee. A number of those opposite in the chamber liked to carp on during the Campbell Newman government era about things being rushed through to committee, and here is another example on top of that of the member for Sandgate and his changes to the electoral system that were rushed through 18 months ago.

It is really clear—I completely echo the sentiments that have been expressed already—that certain members opposite woke up on Sunday, they grabbed the bacon, eggs and orange juice and saw the media reports that the LNP were putting together a tough, detailed plan to try to address this issue. I, too, will take the opportunity to congratulate the shadow Attorney-General on the excellent work that he has done. If honourable members want to talk about resources given, he has virtually crafted this on his own with very minimal assistance apart from the appropriate touchstones. He absolutely deserves full credit.

This is typical Labor: tough talk that at the end of the day is not backed up with the substantial facts. Labor claim that GPS offenders will be tracked for the rest of their lives. There is absolutely no guarantee that Labor’s amendments will ensure that at all. In fact, for a GPS tracker to be applied under Labor’s weak laws a reportable offender must engage in ‘concerning conduct’ that is intercepted by the police, brought before police and sanctioned by a court as part of a prohibition order. In fact, I read with interest in the explanatory notes—

A prohibition order takes effect upon the respondent being notified of its existence and remains in force for 5 years for an adult respondent or 2 years for a child respondent.

I repeat: five years for an adult respondent, not for the rest of their lives. Labor claims that police will direct where these people live. Again, that is only done through a prohibition order that needs to be court sanctioned once an offender has engaged in concerning conduct. It is not a given. It is not a guarantee, as those opposite would claim in the media. Labor claim there will be ongoing monitoring of reportable offenders when their amendments allow an offender to go to a Supreme Court to have their order suspended after 15 years. Crucially, Labor’s laws also do not apply to all repeat sexual predators. They neglect the safety of vulnerable women in particular because their amendments do not include all repeat sex offenders. That is, serial rapists whose victims predominantly will be women will be released unsupervised in the community under Labor’s soft, watered-down laws. It is one of the significant shortfalls of Labor’s rushed and cobbled together laws. They are relying, as has been said repeatedly on this side—and this is absolutely unbelievable—on an honesty system to monitor offenders. It is hard to believe but true. They are the worst kinds of offenders.

In contrast, the LNP will have strict supervision and indeterminate supervision of Queensland’s most notorious, dangerous and violent sex offenders. Is it any wonder that Labor continually blocked attempts by the LNP to introduce tougher laws in the parliament? I do not get it. If the opposition bring to the table laws that will actually enhance society’s ideals and that are for the greater good of society, why would you not, just once, as a government take stock and go, ‘You know what? We’re actually going to adopt that,’ and introduce something that will stand the test of time? No, arrogance and hubris have absolutely come to the fore. I repeat that: arrogance and hubris have come to the fore. Why do those opposite not adopt the sensible amendments put forward by the shadow Attorney-General? It is because of arrogance.