




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

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**POLICE SERVICE ADMINISTRATION (DISCIPLINE REFORM) AND OTHER
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (12.06 pm): I rise to make a short contribution to the Police Service Administration (Discipline Reform) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. Before I start can I acknowledge the work that our police officers do each and every day. It is without question one of the most challenging jobs that exists in our community. I also want to acknowledge the contribution from my former police colleagues in the chamber today, who have lived and breathed policing and the various iterations of the police disciplinary process that have evolved over many years.

I was a member of the Police Service in 1990 when the Police Service Administration Act first came into effect. As I progressed through my career in the Police Service I worked within the bounds of that legislation. As I rose to more senior ranks I was placed in a position on many occasions of using the sanctions and the disciplinary process at the various stations I was attached to. For a lot of police officers involved in that process, both as the subject officer and as the authorising officer, it certainly was a stressful time. Some of the disciplinary complaints that I was handed were two or three years old.

I acknowledge that it has been recognised here today that a police officer can be under investigation for two to three years. The stress that that puts them under—the fact they cannot be promoted, they cannot be transferred, they are being held up in terms of recognition, they are not allowed to attend courses—all those sorts of things go hand in glove with being under investigation. Unfortunately, we lost a lot of good police officers because of those delays in finalising police investigations and police complaints. I certainly welcome the changes in this long overdue disciplinary reform in this Police Service administration bill before the House today because they are well and truly overdue. This bill is timely.

As the Police Service has evolved, so has the necessity to evolve and update the discipline process with which our police officers are required to comply. If the community is to have confidence in our police officers, they need to know that there is a robust and transparent discipline process in place. Alternatively, police officers need to know where they stand as well in terms of the discipline process should they be subject to that process.

I note some of the new sanctions that can now be imposed. As an authorised officer, we were very limited in the sanctions we could apply as part of a disciplinary process. At times, that became extremely complex and difficult because we are dealing with people's lives. Making and imposing changes and sanctions on those officers can have a life-changing impact. I note that some of the new sanctions are: suspension from duty without pay for a period not exceeding 12 months; disciplinary probation; demotion for a stated period; comprehensive transfer; and a local transfer. When you look at the impact of what, for example, a transfer may mean for an officer who has a family, that is a massive impact, a massive sanction, in terms of saying to an officer, 'You are now transferred.' Not only are they

moving from this station; their spouse may lose their job. Any kids in school will be uprooted and moved to a new locality. In all probability, they will have to sell their house. If we roll all of this together we start to see what that means and appreciate just how severe are some of these sanctions.

There will be times when those sanctions will need to be applied, because we expect our officers to uphold the highest standards in our community. Quite often, they are held to a higher standard than a lot of other occupations in our community, because in our police officers we put our faith and trust. I will never forget being sworn in and being given the power and authority, if necessary, to take someone's life. If we think about that and that burden that rests on their shoulders, we appreciate just how important are these jobs and the responsibility that goes with it.

Quickly, I note that the educational development opportunities that go with this are important, because our officers who are part of this process need the ability to access that development opportunity as well. I commend the bill to the House and I am happy to support it.