




Speech By
Patrick Weir

MEMBER FOR CONDAMINE

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

 **Mr WEIR** (Condamine—LNP) (11.48 am): I rise to make a contribution to the Police Service Administration (Discipline Reform) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. On 12 April 2019, the Economics and Governance Committee recommended that the bill be passed. The LNP supports and welcomes the bill, which condenses a revised police discipline system and has been negotiated with bipartisan support.

The objective of the bill is to provide efficiencies in the investigation of complaints and hearing of allegations, and to suitably discipline officers, while at the same time ensuring the public's confidence in the QPS is maintained. It will effectively reduce delays in finalising discipline investigations, modernise the discipline sanctions that can be imposed upon a subject officer, formalise the role and range of management strategies available as part of the discipline process and address review provisions that apply to the CCC.

This bill ensures that the small number of Queensland police officers who fail to uphold the high standards set by the QPS will be held to account. It is imperative that Queensland maintains a comprehensive and effective police discipline system to ensure that members of the QPS adhere to proper standards of conduct and that public confidence in the Queensland Police Service is preserved.

The reduction of delays in finalising investigations essentially means we will have more men and women on the ground fighting the growing crime rate across our state and keeping our families safe. This change is welcome in the communities of Cambooya, Pittsworth and Oakey where officer numbers and police resources are inadequate due to the population growth. Frontline police officers can only use the resources they have available to them and sometimes this is lacking.

The bill reduces delays by establishing time frames for the institution of discipline proceedings and the finalisation of investigations. It would be good to see these time frames adopted for the hiring process as well. It has taken almost 12 months to fill the position of officer in charge at the Pittsworth Police Station which has been vacant since January 2019 because of the current unlimited appeals process. Proposed section 7.12 provides that generally disciplinary proceedings in relation to a complaint must be commenced within the latest of (a) one year from the date the disciplinary ground arose or (b) six months from the complaint being made. The replacement officer should be a priority to ensure law and order is maintained.

If starting a disciplinary action will compromise a current operation, then the ground for disciplinary action is taken to arise on the day the operation ends, ensuring the public do not lose faith in the QPS. If we can make these changes to ensure investigations are not compromised, is it not too much to make sure we are resourced, such as in Oakey with a second police vehicle? Seven officers sharing one car is impractical. The bill also enhances the efficiency of the investigative process and discipline proceedings by introducing the abbreviated disciplinary process. It allows the prescribed officer, with the permission of the CCC and at any time during the investigation, to invite the subject officer to participate in the ADP.

This bill has bipartisan support from the LNP and all key stakeholders, including the Queensland Police Service, the Queensland Police Union of Employees, the Queensland Police Commissioned Officers' Union of Employees, government representatives and representatives of the legal fraternity. Three stakeholders made submissions on the bill. These stakeholders consisted of the Women's Legal Service, the Queensland Law Society and the Bar Association of Queensland. All stakeholders warmly welcomed the reform of the police disciplinary system, agreeing that the changes were likely to result in a fairer and more effective disciplinary process for the Queensland Police Service which is long overdue. The BAQ did, however, raise some concerns surrounding the new professional development strategies stating that, while professional development was intended to be included in a subject officer's disciplinary history, this was not made explicit in the bill. The new section 11.25(2) forms a strong conclusion that a professional development strategy should be included. However, the definition of 'disciplinary history' in this new section is silent.

There was also discussion from BAQ where they stated some practical examples surrounding professional development strategies, such as where members who have often used a police officer's disciplinary history in criminal trials to support a client's allegation of inappropriate conduct by a police officer. However, despite a pattern of complaints against an officer, members have been unable to prove that pattern of complaint conduct at trial because the subject officer was dealt with by managerial guidance and, as such, discipline history was not recorded. This creates a grey area in the matter, and BAQ asked for a stricter stance whereby professional development strategies will form part of the subject officer's disciplinary history. This process will not leave officers to fend for themselves. Like other industries, the opportunity and access to education activities and further personal and professional development have been made available. It is important to supply educational activities and development opportunities that may assist in improving a police officer's professionalism or minimising the risk of similar behaviour in the future.

The LNP supports these amendments. I once again ask the minister to look at the replacement process for officers in stations, because it has dragged on for far too long in Pittsworth.