




Speech By  
**Charis Mullen**

**MEMBER FOR JORDAN**

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Record of Proceedings, 16 July 2020

**CORRECTIVE SERVICES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mrs MULLEN** (Jordan—ALP) (12.10 pm): I thank the member for Kawana for the invite. Maybe I can come over and have a little dance, as well. There are so many words that I could use to describe the member for Kawana's contribution, but most of those—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Weir): Member for Jordan, you have the call. I ask you to address the bill.

**Mrs MULLEN:** There are so many words that I could use to describe the contribution of the member for Kawana, but most would be unparliamentary and, frankly, I am a lady. I did enjoy the member's trip down memory lane, where we all played cowboys and Indians, mum stayed at home and the Queen reigned supreme. That was a return to the 1950s, which is where the LNP really belong.

I rise to make a contribution on the bill. As a member of the Parliamentary Crime and Corruption Committee, I will focus my comments on aspects of the bill that deal specifically with our government's response to Taskforce Flaxton. The Crime and Corruption Commission undertook that operation in response to a number of issues, including increases in the number of allegations made to the CCC about corrupt conduct involving staff working in Queensland prisons and the outcomes of a number of CCC investigations that identified possible systemic issues. Taskforce Flaxton sought to identify corruption and risks of corruption in Queensland prisons and to identify the legislative, police and operational environments that enable corrupt conduct to occur. It was a thorough investigation. The commission received 33 detailed written submissions and heard from 34 witnesses during the 16 days of public hearings. They heard from Queensland Corrective Services staff and just over one-third of current Queensland prisoners who shared their views via a voluntary and anonymous survey. The CCC also consulted with QCS staff to better understand the existing operational environment.

Taskforce Flaxton identified that there are significant corruption risks in Queensland prisons and that the existing anti-corruption framework is not effectively preventing, detecting or dealing with them. The final CCC report, tabled in December 2018, identified 33 recommendations that sought to improve the performance of the QCS and the external oversight mechanisms. Our government has supported, or supported in principle, all 33 recommendations made in the report.

A number of amendments to the Corrective Services Act 2006 have been identified as immediate priorities to assist the QCS to execute its duties to address corruption within the organisation. Those include amendments authorising the chief executive to require Corrective Services staff to submit to alcohol and drug testing. The CCC reported that prison staff with drug or alcohol problems present a very real corruption risk and it was important to identify staff with substance abuse problems as they were more likely to engage in problematic decision-making and behaviour, such as excessive or unreasonable use of force. The bill proposes to insert new part 9A, Alcohol and drug testing, into chapter 6 of the Corrective Service Act to support that recommendation. Part 9A provides significant detail. Amongst other things, it imposes alcohol limits on Corrective Services persons and requires a Corrective Services person to submit to alcohol and substance tests at certain times. A number of other

amendments were recommended, including granting broader powers to search staff working in Corrective Services facilities and improving property and exhibit management policies and practices to decrease corruption risks.

In its Taskforce Flaxton report, the CCC acknowledged that the QCS had improved the performance of the function of the ethical standards unit since the machinery of government changes in 2017 and the establishment of the ESU, now the Professional Standards and Governance Command in the QSC. Nevertheless, the CCC recommended that the QCS broaden the remit of the ethical standards unit to provide the following functions: prevention and early intervention, professional standards, integrity policy framework, complaints management, investigation, discipline system, witness support, critical incidents, covert operations and risk management.

The bill before us proposes to amend the CS Act to increase the functions of an inspector to include investigating alleged misconduct or alleged corrupt conduct of a staff member; widen the circumstances in which an inspector can require information from a person performing a function under the CS Act to include alleged misconduct or alleged corrupt conduct of a staff member; allow an inspector to enter a Corrective Services facility or a community corrections office at any time; and require an inspector appointed to investigate an incident, alleged misconduct or alleged corrupt conduct of a staff member to give a written report to the chief executive stating the results of the investigation and any recommendations. These are particularly important changes. An effective ESU promotes an integrity culture, discipline and professional practice across the agency and is necessary to prevent, detect and deal with corruption risks in prisons. It is also necessary for staff and public confidence in the QCS discipline process.

Our government has also acknowledged the corruption risks that overcrowding in prisons presents, which was raised in the Taskforce Flaxton report and, of course, has been raised by a number of members in the House during the debate on the bill. Our government has committed significant funding to deliver stage 2 of the Southern Queensland Correctional Precinct, which will deliver an extra 4,000 beds by 2023. That will be particularly important for our economic recovery, as well. The project is expected to create more than 400 construction jobs over the three-year build and over time will deliver more than 500 permanent jobs, as well as ongoing opportunities for local businesses to supply goods and services.

The task force also observed that Queensland's hybrid prison system, with its mix of public and private operational responsibility, was not optimal. That is something that our government is responding to by committing \$111.4 million over five years to transition the Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre and the Southern Queensland Correctional Centre to public operation. Importantly, the Palaszczuk government has committed \$25.2 million over four years to implement the recommendations of Taskforce Flaxton. This shows the regard that we have for the recommendations and the seriousness of the findings and our government's commitment to ensuring the reforms will improve safety for staff and prisoners, ensure decisions are ethical and impartial, enhance accountability and transparency, and raise performance standards. I commend the bill to the House.