




Speech By  
**Daniel Purdie**

**MEMBER FOR NINDERRY**

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**JUSTICE AND OTHER LEGISLATION (COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE)  
AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr PURDIE** (Ninderry—LNP) (12.21 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Justice and Other Legislation (COVID-19 Emergency Response) Amendment Bill. This bill amends over 20 different acts, including the Body Corporate and Community Management Act, the Public Health Act, the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act, the Youth Justice Act and the Corrective Services Act. Broadly, the proposed amendments address a number of issues in response to the COVID-19 emergency and there are a range of sensible measures in this bill which will help ease the pain and aid the recovery from COVID-19.

In relation to the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act, the bill amends the PPRA to allow a magistrate or Childrens Court to issue an order for a COVID-19 test from a relevant person. This is a positive and necessary amendment that will help protect the health, safety and welfare of our frontline police officers. Police come in close contact with offenders on a daily basis, potentially exposing themselves to the risk of contracting COVID-19. This amendment will give police the ability to request a test order, thereby identifying whether or not there is any risk of infection, giving them the ability to take the necessary precautions.

Moving to the amendments to the Corrective Services Act, the most sensible thing the government has done in this bill is follow the advice of the LNP. Before this bill made its way to the floor of parliament, this government was forced to backflip on what it thought was an urgent priority—to give prisoners an early release from jail. This government is renowned for being soft on crime—Queenslanders know it and our police know it—but this was spectacular, even by its standards, trying to use COVID-19 as an excuse to give criminals their freedom before they had served their time.

Let us go through the chronology of the life of this amendment and what has happened over the last couple of days. On Monday the Premier and her cabinet approved the urgent introduction of an amendment to the Corrective Services Act which would see prisoners get an early mark from jail. On Tuesday, in an attempt to sell the unsellable, we were told that this government thought prisoners deserved to be released from jail early so they did not miss their flight home. At 7 pm on Tuesday, after receiving an inquiry from the *Courier-Mail*, the police minister defended this position. At 8 pm, only 60 minutes after this defence, the minister had backed down and criminals would no longer be released early. What happened between 7 pm and 8 pm to change the minister's position? Well, news had gotten out that the minister was opening up the community chest and giving out 'get out of jail free' cards. This is not a game of Monopoly. This is the parliament of Queensland. The fact that this government even thought it could get away with that beggars belief. We are dealing with important legislation here and this government treats it like a dinner reservation—provisions in at 7 pm and out by 8 pm.

One thing the Labor government and this minister do have a monopoly on is being weak on crime. The only redeeming feature of this whole episode is they have started listening to the LNP, and if they continue to do that maybe they are half a chance of keeping Queenslanders safe. Let us look at the article in the *Courier-Mail* yesterday. The opposition leader is quoted in there saying in the afternoon,

'If you do the crime, you must do the time,' and then the police minister is later quoted in the same article saying exactly the same thing. I know which party was saying it first and I know which party has been saying it for the last five years. I do not mind the minister copying our homework—in the end, it is for the best—but if the government was doing its job it would not have to copy our work. It would be tough on crime and it would be putting the community ahead of criminals. For the time being I am happy for the minister to call us up and just ask for the answers rather than sneakily copy our work. It will save a lot of time, effort and embarrassment.

This is just another example of the Palaszczuk government having the wrong priorities. There is nothing in this bill to protect the victims of domestic and family violence, there is nothing in this bill to further protect children from paedophiles online and there is nothing in this bill to protect Queenslanders from the youth crime epidemic currently gripping our communities. In fact, such was the urgency to debate this bill that this government has, in its haste, failed to address those same critical health and safety measures it had previously promised to deliver and which one could reasonably expect would be addressed in such urgent legislation. It is bitterly disappointing that this emergency legislation makes no reference to the increasing threat of domestic violence in our communities.

Recent Google data has shown that during this COVID-19 crisis there has been a 75 per cent increase in the average number of searches seeking advice and support in relation to family and domestic violence. Earlier this month the new Deputy Premier and Minister for Health said, 'Anything we can do to address the increase in domestic and family violence during COVID is important.' Even the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence acknowledged that service providers had reported a dramatic increase in the brutality and severity of attacks on women and children, yet nowhere in this emergency legislation are there any measures to help protect the highly vulnerable victims and potential victims of domestic violence.

What has been clearly laid out in the chamber over the past few days is the contrast between the priorities of this Labor government and that of a Deb Frecklington-led LNP. As Labor was trying to slip through urgent amendments to give criminals an early release from prison, our leader, the member for Nanango, was preparing to table amendments to the Criminal Code to better protect victims of DV from strangulation. Similarly, when it comes to the urgent amendments to the Youth Justice Act in this bill to allow for a short period of contract labour in youth detention facilities, the government should have been moving urgent amendments to repeal its current catch-and-release laws—laws which have sparked a juvenile crime epidemic that has seen communities across our state held to ransom by the actions of recidivist young criminals. Queenslanders rightly would have expected this emergency legislation to address these weak laws which see young offenders back out on the street before our hardworking police have had time to file the paperwork.

Our police and all Queenslanders have had enough. As communities across the state, including Townsville, the Gold Coast and areas of Brisbane, suffer from this ongoing crime epidemic, this soft-on-crime Labor government has betrayed them yet again, but this is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to examining this legislation which, according to the government, is so urgent and important to the health and safety and financial wellbeing of Queenslanders that it needs to bypass the usual checks and balances of the committee process. Instead of amendments to stop the revolving door justice system, the Palaszczuk Labor government thinks it more important to amend the Youth Justice Act with regard to industrial relations. This government's priority should be to reduce crime, helping members of the community not feel like prisoners in their own homes. Instead, it is more interested in getting prisoners back out into our communities.

It is these lessons that this government has failed to learn that will continue to plague its incompetent administration. These are the hallmarks of a debt, integrity and scandal ridden Labor government that has no plan, no budget and no leadership. When we make it to the other side of COVID-19, Queenslanders will not be celebrating the swift pace of an economic recovery; they will be mourning the loss of jobs that will leave a generational scar to be borne by our children and grandchildren. They will mourn our once vibrant tourism industry—a \$300 billion industry that once supported one in five jobs in this state but which was left to wither because of our Premier's misplaced priorities.

The highest priority of any government should be the safety and security of its citizens and to provide an economic environment in which its citizens can thrive. It is now crystal clear that it is only an LNP government that will provide safer communities for all Queenslanders and their families, only an LNP government that will rebalance the scales of justice in favour of victims and community safety and only an LNP government that will provide a long-term economic plan and a road map to economic recovery.