




Speech By
Jessica Pugh

MEMBER FOR MOUNT OMMANEY

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CORRECTIVE SERVICES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms PUGH** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (4.20 pm): This bill is important in so many ways, but for me it is important because it boosts safety for prison officers, many of whom live in the Mount Ommaney electorate. In fact, I suspect that being a corrective services officer is the most popular vocation for parents at my kids' primary school and that is why all of the children are so well behaved.

The corrective service officers are a huge part of the Mount Ommaney community. They are often the unsung heroes of front-line safety. They work in an extremely challenging environment with the most complex and difficult members of our community. The work they do can be and is often dangerous and the best days are when nothing happens, but it is vital work. Our corrective services officers are keeping our communities safe and in return it is incumbent upon us to keep them safe. This bill will go some significant way to achieving that aim.

There will now be tougher penalties for prisoners who assault those officers. Any prisoner who commits a serious assault on a corrections officer will face up to 14 years in prison for that offence. This rightfully matches the penalty that applies to anyone assaulting a police officer and other front-line service officers. This is the right thing to do. There is another important aspect to this bill that supports community safety. The bill also makes it an offence for a parolee to remove or tamper with a GPS device. A person who does so will serve the remainder of their original sentence behind bars with an additional three months added to that sentence. This sends a very clear message to those on parole.

The bill before the House today recognises the importance of reducing the risks of corruption within Queensland prisons. In December 2018 the Crime and Corruption Commission delivered *Taskforce Flaxton: an examination of corruption risks and corruption in Queensland prisons*. Taskforce Flaxton made 33 recommendations to reform Queensland's anti-corruption framework for correctional centres, including to improve external oversight mechanisms and safety for staff and prisoners; increase accountability and transparency; and raise performance standards. The government supported all 33 recommendations.

The government recognises that the vast majority of visitors and officers who enter Queensland prisons do the right thing, but that the actions of a small minority who do the wrong thing put everyone's safety at risk. The legislative amendments we are introducing respond to the number of risks identified by Taskforce Flaxton. This includes authorising the chief executive officer to require corrective services staff to submit to alcohol and drug testing, strengthening powers to undertake a general or scanning search of staff at a corrective services facility at any time, authorising the appointment, role and function of Queensland Corrective Services Professional Standards and Governance Command inspectors to investigate misconduct or corrupt conduct against a staff member.

Importantly, the bill also introduces a new offence to address the risk of inappropriate relationships between staff and prisoners or offenders to prevent corrupt conduct. The bill introduces a new offence prohibiting a staff member from having an intimate relationship with an offender. This offence includes sexual conduct or other physical expressions of affection or sexual contact or the exchange of written or other forms of communication of a sexual nature. The offence does not apply if

the staff member could not have reasonably known the person was an offender or if the intimate relationship commenced before the person was a prisoner or offender. The offence will attract a maximum penalty of 100 penalty units or three years imprisonment to reflect the seriousness of this behaviour.

Everything about this bill is supporting the safety and integrity of our corrections network. As I said before, our corrections officers may often be the unsung heroes but our government knows the invaluable role they have in supporting community safety. In my relatively short time as the member for Mount Ommaney I have had the opportunity to visit the men's correctional facility, the women's correctional facility and the remand centre on multiple occasions, including the maximum security wing. I mentioned one of these visits in my first speech. This is an issue that is really important to me. As a reward for my fifth visit, I also got to see the dog training. A few years ago I also went out to the Borallon Correctional Centre in the electorate of the member for Ipswich West to see a play. It is a fantastic facility. I thank the officers who have shown me through on my many visits, the hundreds of corrections staff who I have had the opportunity to meet with who have indulged me, had me along to morning briefings and invited me to get a better understanding of the issues facing our courageous corrections staff. Many of them are residents in my electorate and I appreciate the work that they do. They do not get enough praise for it. I hope that this bill helps them understand how appreciated they are.