




Speech By
Hon. Mark Ryan

MEMBER FOR MORAYFIELD

Record of Proceedings, 16 July 2020

CORRECTIVE SERVICES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. MT RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services) (4.25 pm), in reply: I join the member for Mount Ommaney in acknowledging the great workers in Queensland Corrective Services. It is an outstanding organisation and they deserve to be recognised for the work that they do. I also acknowledge the hard work that has gone into this bill. I acknowledge the people from the legislation team in Queensland Corrective Services, the Queensland Police Service and the other agencies, as well as the committee, parliamentary staff and Parliamentary Counsel.

The amendments proposed in this bill will boost community safety and deliver an improved correctional system that is responsive and flexible with safety at the forefront. Passage of this bill will protect the community from the risks of unregistered firearms and from replica firearms being used irresponsibly. Actions and inactions taken by the LNP when it was in government placed a huge strain on infrastructure in the correctional system and efficiency and staff safety. The LNP in government shut down prison industries. Under the Newman government the Darling Downs Correctional Centre was closed and 180 staff lost their jobs. The LNP gutted rehabilitation programs and diversionary courts. They slashed prison industry programs, an essential component of prisoner rehabilitation. The LNP has a history of underinvestment in correctional centres. When thousands of public servants were sacked under the former LNP government, the LNP also cancelled maintenance on correctional centres and outsourced training.

In response to the statements made about prison capacity in this debate, the government has made a record investment to prevent crime and support a safer correctional system and community. We have approved almost \$1 billion in capital works projects across Queensland Corrective Services. These projects have delivered around 660 jobs. In our last budget, the more than \$1 billion for Corrective Services was the most significant budget for Queensland Corrective Services in the state's history. By 2023 this government will have delivered an additional 4,000 beds across Queensland's prison facilities. For the member for Coomera who asked the question, Queensland Corrective Services has confirmed that there are no triple-ups in Queensland prison facilities.

This government has zero tolerance for violence. The safety of every corrective services officer is paramount. The amendments in this bill will improve safety in correctional centres by increasing the maximum penalty for serious assaults on corrective services officers. In relation to the member for Mirani's comments regarding the need for independent inspectors to investigate alleged corrupt conduct of staff, the amendments in this bill will enhance the powers of Queensland Corrective Services Professional Standards and Governance Command Inspectors by allowing them to access corrective services facilities, staff and information relevant to the investigation of alleged staff misconduct or corruption.

I will now address some of the gross misconceptions raised by members of the LNP about replica firearms in this debate. The big point here is it is not about what they do it is about what they look like. This is reinforced by the police, the coroner and many sections of the broader community.

Today in this House the performance of the member for Kawana was a total joke. Replica firearms are not a joke. While this government fully supports gel blasters being used for recreation, we are also aware that there are grave consequences for reckless and irresponsible use. There have been instances where gel blasters that look like real firearms have been used in serious offences such as armed hold-ups. That is clearly evident in comments made by Coroner Ryan, who recommended in his inquest into police shootings that the Queensland Police Service consider establishing a regulatory scheme for replica firearms.

This government's framework was written by police and is supported by police who have to respond to incidents involving replica firearms being used irresponsibly. This framework was the subject of consultation with key stakeholders. Simon White from the Cairns Gel Blasters Club said—

I appreciate the need for regulation and this strikes the right balance.

Brett Thompson, the CEO of the Queensland Homicide Victims Support Group, said—

If this means people do the right thing and adhere to the new rules then that's sensible. There should be clear consequences in place for individuals who don't do the right thing.

Tony Ferris from the RSL said—

This is a sensible, workable solution.

The Queensland Police Union supports it.

This government supports the overwhelming majority of people with gel blasters who use them responsibly. The bottom line is that if you are intending to use a gel blaster or a replica for anything that could be considered unlawful, dangerous, irresponsible or alarming and threatening to the public, that is not a reasonable excuse to have one. Police will always take the circumstances into account when making assessments of what is a reasonable excuse for ownership and I have provided a number of examples in my second reading speech.

The act will require all restricted items to be stored in a locked container. There are no specific requirements about what that container needs to be or how it should be locked. If the member for Kawana chooses to use his gun safe, that is fine. However, he could also consider alternatives that are readily available around the home, such as a toolbox or a filing cabinet. The LNP's hyperbole on gel blasters is astounding. Worse still, it is misleading. The Leader of the Opposition has previously said that she wants to ban gel blasters. Now her MPs are contradicting her. Their hypocrisy knows no bounds. They say one thing in Brisbane and one thing in the bush.

The Queensland Police Service has worked with key stakeholders in the gel blaster industry to formulate this policy.

Opposition members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Pugh): One moment, Minister. Pause the clock. Member for Southern Downs, I will warn you if I hear you again.

Mr RYAN: Key retailers and field operators are aware of the policy and how it will work for them. They have expressed a willingness to work with the Queensland Police Service in implementing this policy. In fact, for the past 12 months many of those stakeholders have been working on the policy with the Queensland Police Service. The policy is based on the Police Commissioner's advice.

This is a framework that supports the continued responsible use of gel blasters, supports small businesses that sell gel blasters and promotes community safety. The framework includes sensible and balanced changes. It reinforces that anyone who transports a replica firearm or gel blaster that looks like a real firearm should carry them in a suitable bag or case away from public view. Owners of a replica firearm or gel blaster that looks like a real firearm should keep it secured when stored at home. Owners of replicas and gel blasters that look like real firearms should have a reasonable excuse for owning them. The bottom line is that if you are intending to use a gel blaster or a replica that looks like a real firearm for anything that could be considered unlawful, dangerous, irresponsible or alarming and threatening to the public, then that is not a reasonable excuse. This policy protects the gel blaster industry and bolsters its integrity. I commend the bill to the House.