



Speech By  
**Hon. Mark Ryan**


**MEMBER FOR MORAYFIELD**

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Record of Proceedings, 11 August 2020

## **CORRECTIVE SERVICES (COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE) REGULATION**

### **Disallowance of Statutory Instrument**

 **Hon. MT RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services) (6.16 pm): I rise to oppose the motion, and let me make one thing very clear: corrective services officers are continuing to facilitate face-to-face contact and supervision of high-risk community based offenders, including sex offenders and those subject to supervision orders, under the DP(SO) Act and have done so for the entire duration of the COVID-19 emergency. To say it clearly, nothing has changed for these offenders—nothing. They are still subject to strict monitoring and supervision. Nothing has changed. Tonight the LNP's rantings are just scaremongering and insulting to our hardworking QCS officers who every day are doing everything they can to keep the community safe.

Let us talk about a hypothetical for one moment. If a DPSO offender were infected with COVID, what we would do—and this is the advice of the Queensland Corrective Services Commissioner—is put more supervision in place for those offenders. We would put more monitoring in place. This regulation allows QCS, when those offenders are infected with COVID, to be flexible with their monitoring to ensure community safety. That is what this is about. In instances where high-risk offenders catch COVID, we would probably put more monitoring and more supervision in place.

The LNP's motion is reckless and poses a potential danger to the community and to our hardworking QCS officers. The potential consequence of the motion is that it could facilitate the spread of COVID-19 should an offender become infected with the virus. Clearly the member for Ninderry's intent is to block an emergency contingency power that would help stop the spread of COVID-19. Clearly those opposite do not value the jobs of our hardworking corrective services officers and now we know they do not value their health or safety. To suggest that a community corrections officer should meet face to face with an offender with COVID-19 is outrageous and shows that the LNP has no respect for frontline staff responsible for keeping our community safe.

Those opposite have no respect for the health of Queenslanders, they have no respect for the directions of the Chief Health Officer, whom they have publicly criticised, and they are unfit to govern. They do not just want to sack our public servants; they want to expose our public servants to potential health and safety risks. They have been on the wrong side of every decision during this COVID-19 pandemic. How many times did they scream for the border to be opened? Sixty-four times!

**Mr HUNT:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. It is along the lines of the minister's point of order during my speech. He is straying into border territory now and nothing to do with the motion before the House. The point of order is on relevance

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Pugh): Thank you very much. I do not need a detailed explanation. Border closure was mentioned by both sides during the debate. The minister has mentioned it. I am listening closely to the substance of his contribution and if I feel he is straying I will certainly rule. Thank you, member for Nicklin.

**Mr RYAN:** Responding to the comments about the borders, I note that those opposite called for them to be opened 64 times. Even last week there was still an online petition on their website calling for the borders to be opened. Now they are demanding that our hardworking community corrections officers should be exposed to COVID-19 in a reckless and irresponsible way. It is madness.

Here are the facts: the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact day-to-day life in Queensland, including the operations of Queensland's prisons and community corrections officers. Queensland Corrective Services has undertaken significant planning to ensure business continuity, the safety of our officers and the wellbeing of the people in the care and under the supervision in the community of Queensland Corrective Services. Queensland Corrective Services has implemented strategies to manage operational activities based on assessments of risk of health and safety whilst also ensuring our community stays safe. To suggest for one moment that Queensland Corrective Services would do something that would undermine the safety of our community is an insult and it just shows that those opposite are using this as an opportunity to scaremonger and attack our hardworking public servants. Queensland Corrective Services has been involved every step of the way in ensuring that we have a staged response to COVID-19 and are acting in accordance with the advice and the support of Queensland's Chief Health Officer.

With respect to community corrections operations, as at 3 August 2020 corrective services officers were supervising almost 18,000 community based offenders from 36 district offices and from over 150 reporting locations right across our state. The health, safety and wellbeing of corrective services officers, offenders and the broader community has always remained Queensland Corrective Services' No. 1 priority throughout the COVID-19 emergency. All offenders released to supervision by the Parole Board or the courts have different levels of supervision based on their risk. The greater the risk, the more intense their supervision and the more restrictive their conditions.

During the COVID-19 emergency period, electronic monitoring, substance testing, home visits and face-to-face appointments with community based offenders have continued based on assessments of risk of health and safety. Let me make this clear one more time: corrective services officers are continuing to facilitate face-to-face contact and supervision of high-risk community based offenders, including sex offenders and those subject to supervision orders under the DP(SO) Act and have done so for the entire duration of the COVID-19 emergency. Nothing has changed.

Section 7 of the regulation supports Queensland Corrective Services' operations by ensuring that community based offenders remain supervised and managed in accordance with legislative obligations in response to the COVID-19 emergency whilst not undermining community safety. Section 7 was introduced as part of a contingency plan to ensure corrective services officers can continue to supervise offenders during the COVID-19 emergency period in the unlikely event that public health directions prevent in-person reporting. Let me say that again: in the unlikely event that public health directions prevent in-person reporting. Where in-person reporting is not possible, community corrections officers remain committed to ensuring the robustness of the supervision and rehabilitation of community based offenders by conducting reporting in other ways, and in many instances that reporting will be at an enhanced level. Further, in circumstances where these offenders are unable to report in person, section 7 ensures these offenders are not inadvertently breaching their relevant orders as a result of a public health direction. Section 7 will not affect the supervision of offenders subject to electronic monitoring.

This contingency plan has not been used because no offenders have been infected with COVID-19. Let me say that again: the contingency plan has not been used in respect of high-risk offenders because those offenders have not been infected with COVID-19, and hopefully they never will be. It will only be used if an offender is diagnosed with COVID-19. It would be reckless and just plain stupid to require a COVID-19 infected person to be out in the community, running into people in the community and potentially infecting Queensland Corrective Services staff. What this contingency does is establish a mechanism for the effective ongoing monitoring of an offender in the unlikely event that that person contracts COVID-19. This is a commonsense measure which enhances community safety and protects our staff in Queensland Corrective Services from the potential exposure of COVID-19. For these reasons I oppose the motion.