




Speech By
Michael Crandon

MEMBER FOR COOMERA

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COMMUNITY BASED SENTENCES (INTERSTATE TRANSFER) BILL

 **Mr CRANDON** (Coomera—LNP) (4.40 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Community Based Sentences (Interstate Transfer) Bill 2019. At the outset it needs to be stated that the LNP cannot support the bill unless the minister can guarantee that Queensland will not become a dumping ground for interstate offenders living in the community as a result of becoming a net importer of these offenders.

I note the policy objective of the bill is to establish Queensland's participation in a national scheme for the formal transfer and enforcement of community based sentences between Australian jurisdictions. According to the explanatory notes, the policy objectives are achieved by creating a new standalone act in Queensland to implement the nationally agreed legislative framework, facilitating the transfer of community based sentences across Australia. The bill applies to persons serving community based sentences. Community based sentences currently available in Queensland that will be eligible to be transferred under the scheme are: probation orders; community service orders; graffiti removal orders; intensive correction orders; and drug and alcohol treatment orders. The bill does not apply to juvenile offenders, offenders on parole or offenders with a sentence that imposes a fine or financial penalty.

This raises a question in my mind that the minister may like to answer. If a breach of an order occurs—let's say a breach of an intensive correction order—and an individual is incarcerated, will that prisoner, as they would now be, be sent back to the jurisdiction where the original offence occurred to complete their sentence? I ask this in light of the current situation where informal arrangements are in place between Queensland and other jurisdictions to supervise offenders on community based sentences when they travel or move interstate. Without participation in the national scheme, there are no powers to initiate breach action where an offender is not abiding by the conditions of their sentence. As I understand it, under these circumstances, we would simply send the offender back to the originating jurisdiction as it is their responsibility to manage the sentence breach, not ours. Otherwise, would we be stuck with them in our overcrowded system?

I have other concerns. For example, we have the highest unemployment rate in the country. Sadly, people in the corrective services system are discriminated against when it comes to employment. Based on the figures I have seen, there will be a net increase to the numbers coming to Queensland. Where will they attain work? Where will they live? Not all will have accommodation available to them. Sadly, people in the corrective services system are discriminated against when it comes to accommodation.

I have provided assistance to incarcerated individuals as a result of family representations to be transferred to other jurisdictions, both to and from Queensland, to complete their sentence. There have been good reasons to do so, mainly to enable family support and family connection. Research confirms that support networks around offenders assist in the rehabilitation process, as well as with mental health issues. Are we properly weighing up the overall benefits to the community here in Queensland, as well as benefits to individuals, by allowing a huge net increase in numbers back into Queensland of offenders who, for whatever reason, chose to live and commit crimes in other jurisdictions?

I note there were four submissions made on the bill. These submissions were from Sisters Inside, the Queensland Law Society, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service and an individual. Of interest to me, which raises a further question, is the fact that the Queensland Law Society raised concerns about the registration criteria which relates to requirements of the need to be a corresponding community based sentence under the law of Queensland. This is because in some jurisdictions, probation orders, community service orders and intensive correction orders—all present in Queensland—have been abolished in favour of a community correction order. They queried the effect that this has on a Queensland defendant who wishes to apply for an interstate transfer. Are we going to be left with offenders who do not have a corresponding community correction order in other jurisdictions, yet are able to receive all and sundry from other jurisdictions? Queensland should not be a dumping ground for offenders or a destination of choice for interstate prisoners, which is why Labor should only agree to the formalisation of existing arrangements as long as Queensland does not become a net importer of these interstate offenders.

The Queensland Police Service is already low in officer numbers and resources. The last thing Queensland needs is for valuable police resources to be used to monitor interstate offenders. Consideration must also be given to the safety of the community. The more offenders we have running around the state, the more the community is at risk from harm. Further, it would cost Queensland taxpayers to provide rehabilitation and other support services for interstate offenders which is money that should be spent reducing recidivism rates and preventing crime in Queensland.

In closing, I take the opportunity to wish the retired member for Bundamba, Jo-Ann Miller, all the very best in her future endeavours, in her future life. Jo-Ann and I have had our moments at various times where we have not agreed on particular matters, however we have also vehemently agreed on others. I wish you well, Jo-Ann. God be with you.