




Speech By
Patrick Weir

MEMBER FOR CONDAMINE

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POLICE POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr WEIR** (Condamine—LNP) (6.18 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Police Powers and Responsibilities and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. The policy objectives of the bill include to: clarify powers of law enforcement to access information on or through electrical devices so there is no ambiguity as to the scope of information that can be lawfully accessed; enhance the operations of the Weapons Licensing branch of the Queensland Police Service; and create efficiencies for the Queensland Police Service in general and increase community safety.

The amendments to the Prostitution Licensing Authority have been withdrawn from the bill, the most contentious part of this bill. This has obviously affected everybody's speeches, but I am very pleased to see it go from further consideration.

The LNP supports the increase of access information powers which will permit police to search the cloud services of suspected child sex offenders, terrorists, murderers or any other offender. This means the police can apply for an order that will require a person to provide a password and/or swipe pattern details to an electronic device, for example. Any measure that targets child sex offenders is supported by the LNP to ensure that the perpetrators of such terrible crimes are found in a timely manner.

As technology continues to evolve, police methods and tactics need to evolve with it. Unfortunately, we know that particularly sex offenders and terrorists are very computer savvy. They know how to hide these details and make them very difficult to find. Accessing these details and accessing the cloud is a very important part of accessing this information to go forward to bust these paedophile rings or terrorism outfits and bring them to a successful prosecution. That will be supported by this side of the House.

As I said, technology continues to evolve and the police must keep pace. In 2019 the LNP introduced a private member's bill which promoted the ongoing supervision of dangerous violent sex offenders to ensure they are monitored with tracking devices once leaving the confines of jail so as not to reoffend. That is another part of what I say: as technology evolves, this is where we need to go. Anyone who has worked with me—I do not know if any of the committee members are still here; I see that the chair is still here—knows that for so long I have raised the issue of the increased powers of departmental officers. Under the Water Act, the Fisheries Act and the vegetation management legislation—

Mr Krause: The tree police.

Mr WEIR: Exactly right, member for Scenic Rim. All these officers have been granted powers. In regard to every one of these pieces of legislation, I said to the chair, 'If you grant these powers to the police, perhaps I could support them.' I support some additional powers for the police. It is good to see, because these powers have been handed out willy-nilly by this government to departmental officers.

The next part of the bill I address concerns the LNP's support of changes to the Weapons Act 1990. There are two major changes to the act: one, the extension of suspension notices; and two, the regulation of firearm modifications. The Weapons Act 1990 currently allows an authorised officer to suspend a person's weapons licence where they suspect on reasonable grounds that the licence holder is no longer a fit and proper person. This change will ensure that a person does not possess a weapon to which they are not entitled and it safeguards community safety. The suspension period is intended to provide the licensee time in which to demonstrate that they are in fact a fit and proper person to hold a weapons licence.

Currently, a suspension can only continue for a maximum period of 30 days until the licence is cancelled. The short time frame has made it difficult for a licence holder to seek the opinion of a medical practitioner and has created a backlog in QCAT when the licensee applies for reinstatement of their licence. The bill rectifies this by extending the time during which a licence can be suspended to 90 days, giving the licence holder more time to access all the information required to renew their weapons licence. Several constituents who are licensed weapons holders have contacted the Condamine office saying that they have not received a renewal notice or other type of notification. The first information they received was a letter stating that their licence was now void. The licence holder then has to go through the process of getting their licence reinstated by reapplying from scratch, something that is not their fault. The issuing of these renewal notices is important to stop the backlog that occurs in the weapons licensing division.

The Queensland Police Service maintains a register of every firearm registered in Queensland and to who it is currently registered. Currently, only firearm owners have an obligation to notify the QPS of any modification to a firearm. The issue is that previously armourers were under no obligation to ensure that the owner of a firearm was allowed to possess the modified firearm. Additionally, they have not been required to notify the weapons licensing department about the modification. Under the bill, armourers will be required to sight a person's licence before modifying any firearm to ensure that the person holding a licensed authority has authorised them to possess the firearm in the new weapons category. Furthermore, armourers will be required to record any modifications in their firearms register and report to weapons licensing about these changes.

I hope that these changes are a very simple piece of accounting, because the Weapons Licensing branch is under strain. Many complaints come into our office about the length of time it takes to renew a licence. I am just doing that now, because my licence expires on my birthday on the 25th of this month. I need to go through that process myself.

Mr Mickelberg: Don't forget to renew!

Mr WEIR: It needs to be simple. I just hope that it is not a complicated process, because these armourers have been slugged with another security licence fee of \$200 per person by the department of natural resources for each qualified licensed employee to handle gun powder on top of their licence to handle weapons issued by the Queensland Police Service. This happened under the amended explosives legislation only last year. One ramification was that every staff member at the barn in Oakey where they sell firearms—it is not just the dealer—had to pay \$200 before they could sell gun powder. These people have enough red tape and bureaucracy; they do not need anymore. We want to ensure that this is not just another layer of bureaucracy that makes it more difficult for those dealers. As I said, we will not oppose this bill. I hope the process is nice and streamlined for those who have to comply.