




Speech By  
**Daniel Purdie**

**MEMBER FOR NINDERRY**

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Record of Proceedings, 30 November 2021

**POLICE POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AND OTHER LEGISLATION  
AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr PURDIE** (Ninderry—LNP) (4.35 pm): I rise to speak to the Police Powers and Responsibilities and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, particularly the amendments to the Corrective Services Act which were announced in parliament on 17 June this year—the morning after a petition, signed by 72,000 people, was tabled in this House calling for Sian Kingi's killer, Barrie John Watts, to be refused parole and calling for tougher laws to help protect the community from monsters like him.

I have witnessed firsthand the excruciating pain experienced by families and friends in the wake of atrocious murders and abuse and the ultimate life sentence they are confined to. I believe the amendments in this bill to the Corrective Services Act will achieve their objective of limiting the retraumatisation of victims' families and friends by introducing a new framework for multiple and child murderers.

The genesis of this bill belongs with Sian Kingi, her family and friends and our community. I have been working closely with Sian's family since they reached out to me after they were notified that the psychopath who raped, tortured and brutally murdered their 12-year-old daughter had applied for parole. It essentially felt like this put the family in a show cause situation, forcing them to relive the atrocities of the past—furnishing affidavits and the like in an attempt to convince the Parole Board to keep their child's killer in jail.

The family felt they were being ignored at every turn, particularly as the Parole Board's decision, which is required to be resolved within three months, dragged on for almost a year. Grief stricken and speechless, the Kingi's quiet voice of desperation grew to a resounding roar of 72,000 people—72,000 people who remember the atrocities committed against Sian and the monster who committed them; 72,000 people who joined her family, her friends and our community to send a clear message that Barrie John Watts, and the worst of the worst offenders like him, should remain behind bars. This legislation is the direct legacy of that journey.

The Kingi's pain and suffering will never go away. Nor will the Morcombes be spared the trauma of losing their son Daniel at the evil hands of Brett Cowan. At least now these two Sunshine Coast families—and indeed families of victims all over Queensland—can be assured that there will be a legislative pathway to keep convicted killers and multiple murderers from ever menacing the community again. At last, at the discretion of the president of the Parole Board, life sentences could mean just that. This is what the community rightfully expect.

The government has stated that the proposed laws 'will support community safety and are aimed at reducing the level of trauma experienced by the families of the victims of violent crimes'. They are about protecting the victims' families and protecting the community. These laws are a response to the community's outcry that up until now a life sentence does not mean a killer will remain incarcerated for life; that the Kingis and Morcombes deserve restorative justice; that these killers are bad people, not just mad people, and are unlikely to ever rehabilitate.

Queenslanders have been screaming out for tougher laws across a range of crime classes. The government has much to do in this space and we in opposition will continue to hold them to account. This government is known to be soft on crime. However, this stance on parole is a welcome relief at least to my Sunshine Coast community who are, unfortunately, all too familiar with child killers. My community welcomes this new message to killers. It is about time that we sent a message to the worst of the worst—that these laws are here to comfort and protect us from the likes of Watts and Cowan ever being released to reoffend.

While there are a number of amendments in this bill that relate to a raft of legislation, I am obviously most interested in the fact that under these proposed laws the president of the Parole Board Queensland will be able to make a declaration that a person who is convicted of killing a child and serving a life sentence or convicted of multiple murders and serving a life sentence and eligible for parole will be blocked from obtaining parole for a period of up to 10 years.

Under the proposed laws there is no limit on the number of declarations that can be issued to these prisoners, which means that a further declaration could be issued for up to 10 years at the expiry of the previous declaration and so on for decades. Also, the president of PBQ will be able to make this declaration irrespective of whether the prisoner has already made an application for parole.

We all know too well, as I outlined above, that when a prisoner applies for parole this can retraumatise families, friends and our communities. These new laws are aimed at shielding those who have lost loved ones from unnecessary pain and suffering and protecting their families, friends and the broader community from unnecessary trauma. Even if a declaration is not made by the president of PBQ, a new presumption against parole will also be introduced for prisoners who fall into this cohort. This means that these prisoners will have to prove they do not pose a threat to the community before they are even considered eligible for parole.

I will now touch on another aspect of this bill that aims to strengthen the no-body no-parole framework to incentivise earlier prisoner cooperation to locate a homicide victim's remains. The bill provides for the board to initiate a process to make a no-cooperation declaration for a person in prison even before the person becomes eligible for parole. By making this declaration the board bars the person subject to it from applying for parole. This is a timeliness provision. Those opposite know full well that it was the LNP in opposition who proposed the no-body no-parole laws months before the government introduced the draft legislation to the House. This is another example of where the LNP has led the government to legislative change.

I guess the remaining question is: on the whole, does this legislation make Queenslanders safer and do the amendments go far enough? Aside from what I believe are significant advances in keeping the worst of the worst killers behind bars, the proposed amendments have been described by LNP committee members as a 'collection of measures bundled together to give the appearance of a concerted response to curb crime'. Concerningly, committee members report that the hearing process highlighted a number of failures of the Parole Board Queensland.

According to the explanatory notes, the amendments are designed to provide for the temporary extension of parole consideration time frames under section 193(3) for a period of six months. This extension will provide an additional 60 days from receipt of a parole application for the board to decide. Commencement of the temporary extended time frame will be by proclamation. The opposition regards this proposal as little more than an admission that the Parole Board is unable to keep pace with current applications. The statement of reservation states—

It is a transparent attempt to paper over an administrative failure to comply with the recommendation from the Sofronoff Review that applications for parole should be dealt with within 120 days.

Anecdotal evidence suggests courts are discounting sentences in the expectation that the Parole Board will be unable to hear applications within the appropriate time. At the same time applications for judicial review are costing thousands of dollars and consuming valuable court time because the Board is unable to meet its obligations.

Simply extending the time for the Board to consider applications will assist neither the applicants nor the community generally.

While this is concerning, I reiterate that my voice today is to support the legislative changes brought about directly by Sian Kingi and the 72,000 people who supported her friends and family in demanding that Barrie John Watts and monsters like him lose their right to ever be reintegrated into society. To her family, friends, our community and me, these new laws will be forever known as 'Sian's Law'. Her parents have told me they believe this is a fitting tribute and a lasting legacy to Sian. In 1990 the sentencing judge said to Watts—

The sentence for murder is life in prison and, in my view, the sentence should mean just that.

'Sian's Law' is deeply profound and personal to her family, friends and our community, and I commend it to the House.