




Speech By
James Lister

MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS

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POLICE POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (6.23 pm): I too rise to speak on the Police Powers and Responsibilities and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. I would first like to address the reduction in knife crime. I think that the government is making a sensible move here. I am particularly pleased that there are exceptions made for those persons who have an occupational requirement to carry a knife. When I think of such occupational necessities I think of the stockmen and farmers you see at the bar at O'Mara's Hotel in Stanthorpe wearing a hobble belt, a leather pouch and a knife, in many cases the blade of which is much shorter than the sheath because for three generations it has been sharpened. It is a necessary tool of the trade for those persons.

It would be remiss of me if I were to stand in this House and talk about that occupational requirement without alerting the House to the wonderful products that are made by Kent Saddlery in my electorate of Stanthorpe. Lyle Kent, Helen Kent and their staff—

Ms Farmer: Great company!

Mr LISTER: Thank you for that. I know that the minister has visited them. I thought that just for the benefit of the House I would table a picture of the knife pouches that they have and also a picture of the great proprietor himself, Lyle Kent, wearing a pair of leather braces and a hobble belt. I wear braces in parliament but I do not wear leather braces. Maybe I will start.

Tabled paper: Extract from the website of Kent Saddlery, Stanthorpe detailing products [2025](#).

In all seriousness, I was concerned about this bill. It has exposed the ineptitude of the Palaszczuk government by allowing the parole system to become so congested and delayed that justice is not being done to individuals. The state has also been occasioned a great deal of cost.

I note the explanatory notes state that one of the objectives of the bill is to 'provide the Parole Board Queensland with greater flexibility to respond to increased workload and the risks different prisoners pose to community safety'. That is a very glib statement which does not present the real situation here. If we have two whole prisons worth of offenders who are waiting for parole and they have their parole applications delayed, that is an extraordinary figure. I wonder whether they are the two prisons the state government spent \$111 million on privatising. The Parole Board has a duty to consider parole applications before it, and the government cannot walk away from their role in failing to resource it properly.

As the member for Clayfield said with great gusto earlier today, it is the proclivity of this government—and Labor governments always—that when they cannot meet their KPIs and legislative standards they come in here and change those standards as part of an omnibus bill. I heard the member for Clayfield talk about things like the sale of assets and so forth. It seems that whenever things get too tough, rather than embark on serious reform, rather than look at the end result and work backwards from that like a good administrator would do, they change the law or throw money at the problem. But at the end of the day, the problem still exists.

The problem we see is that by increasing the period in which a decision has to be made by 60 days they are making it retrospective. There are people in the system now whose applications have been delayed who are going to be subject to this being imposed on them, even though they submitted their applications earlier. We heard it is costing \$4 million a month. That is a very significant figure. That money would fix a lot of roads in my electorate. It would fence a lot of farmers from the wild dogs that attack their sheep from the state forests in the national parks that the Labor Party managed so poorly. It prevents prisoners who wish to prepare to transition into society again from having certainty. It inhibits their ability to make preparations to organise how their life will work once they get outside the walls of the prison.

I also see that the bill will create an indictable offence for unlawfully killing or seriously injuring a police dog or corrections dog, and I applaud that. I am sure that every member of this House would agree, but what about other animals? Those vegan protesters who have invaded farms, feedlots and dairies in my electorate have always got away with a slap on the wrist. They are still subject to summary offences. In some cases they have spread poisons around which offend the animals and caused the staff at Carey Bros abattoir to go to hospital after being overcome by a toxic chemical. To the best of my knowledge, those proceedings all finished long ago in the Magistrates Court. All of the offenders were given a meagre fine and were able to stand on the steps of the courthouse, rejoice in the slightness of that fine and proclaim they are going to do it again. It is great to see this happening, but I think that when farm animals are terrorised, imperilled or endangered by the actions of farm invaders the offenders ought to be subject to being charged with an indictable offence. Of course, we know that the preferences of those who are doing these things ultimately go to the Labor Party, so the Labor Party cannot be too harsh on them. They need them to be out on the streets so they can vote in the next election.

I was watching the minister's second reading speech, and he said that the bill was about protecting victims' families and communities. We have heard many members on this side of the House talk today about crime in their communities. I heard the members for Condamine and Currumbin talk about crime in their communities. I also represent communities that have crime problems—in particular, the town of Goondiwindi. This is a fabulous town; it is a remarkably excellent town.

Mr Last: Hear, hear!

Mr LISTER: I thank my colleague for that. In spite of the fact it is a wonderful town—and it has been declared by Bernard Salt, the esteemed demographer, to be one of the greatest towns in Australia—there is a crime problem there. I would like to see the minister say to the people of Goondiwindi that he is protecting families and victims in the community, because in my opinion—and I am sure in theirs—he is not. We need a serious look at the juvenile justice system.

To be told that punitive measures against juveniles are not the answer is not the answer, because at the end of the day the same kids are getting out night after night to commit the same crimes—the same vehicle thefts, the same burning of vehicles and dumping them in the Condamine River, the same property offences, the same offences of breaking into people's houses and terrorising people, and the same offences of driving vehicles into the front of businesses to steal lollies and cigarettes. It is not good enough that we are told that the community will have to tolerate crime until the Labor Party's social measures have eliminated the cause. That is not on. I know I speak conclusively for the people of Goondiwindi in making that statement.

The government said that they are protecting victims' families and the communities, but they are really hollow words in an electorate like Southern Downs where a wonderful town like Goondiwindi is plagued by youth crime. Youth crime is doing a great deal of damage to the esteem of good, law-abiding people. Those who uphold the law and live by the law are having their houses broken into and their vehicles stolen, and I want to see an end to that. I call on the minister and the government to not just tinker around the edges but to accept that good, law-abiding people are entitled to protection from those offenders. If the minister came out to Southern Downs and spoke to the people of Goondiwindi, he would understand that.

Nobody wants to be told that the interests of offenders are superior to the interests of people who live by and uphold the law. I speak of people like Chris and Gail Henry, who operate the 5 Star Supermarket in Goondiwindi. The shadow minister and member for Burdekin, along with the opposition leader, came out and met Chris Henry and saw the more than \$20,000 worth of damage that was done to his shop when offenders stole a vehicle, drove into the front of the shop and stole lollies and cigarettes. He and his staff suffer great harm when that occurs—harm to their dignity and financial harm in terms of their working hours and the cost of repairing the business. That is just one of many cases in my electorate of Southern Downs.

I also speak of Aileen Norman, who has had her house broken into on three occasions. On each occasion, the keys to her vehicle have been stolen by children and the car has been taken and either driven into the Macintyre River or burnt. On the most recent occasion, she had her car keys hidden under her pillow and the offenders came into her house and stole the keys from under her pillow. Any fair-minded person thinking about how she might feel right now would understand that we need to do something about these kids and get them behind bars.