




Speech By  
**Jason Hunt**

**MEMBER FOR CALOUNDRA**

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

 **Mr HUNT** (Caloundra—ALP) (3.52 pm): I rise today to speak in support of the Police Powers and Responsibilities and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. As always, a very sincere thanks goes to the secretariat for their tireless work in this area and also to my fellow committee members: Peter Russo, member for Toohey; Jonty Bush, member for Cooper; Sandy Bolton, member for Noosa; Laura Gerber, member for Currumbin; and Mr Andrew Powell, member for Glass House.

I rather like our Queensland police. In fact, I like them a heck of a lot. Our police do an immensely difficult and incredibly dangerous job, all while trying to balance the rigors of shiftwork with family life and all while being exposed to so much graphic violence that their mental health and physical safety is under constant assault. If it is not PTSD it is the much less talked about but equally damaging vicarious trauma. The silent wounds that these conditions inflict on our police do not disappear when the shift is finished or when the officer retires. Indeed, these conditions keep corroding long after the critical incident is dealt with and filed away.

Not only do our police face these demons and the ever-present and often tragic consequences of these mental health concerns; they do it all while engaging in the most commendable goal that any job can ever have: to keep us safe. They keep our borders secure during pandemics, they keep our roads safe and as fatality free as possible and they confront and stare down some of the darkest elements in our society in order that the rest of us can flourish in safety. Rapists, thieves, murderers, child sex offenders and anyone else who breaks their social contract and cannot live within our society's laws are all held at bay by our police.

No institution should be above scrutiny or criticism, and our police are no exception, but I do ask that those who take it upon themselves to criticise our police have the good grace and the good sense to do so from the position of an informed opinion. Every time an officer is involved in an incident I am constantly amazed at the ill-informed criticism that is directed at our police. For example, I had no idea there was such a prodigious number of expert marksmen within some sections of our social media communities. Indeed, those who are not Google trained firearm experts appear to be YouTube inspired specialists in control and restraint and self-defence techniques. These people are ever ready to vilify police with a level of online expertise that I am quite certain either does not exist or has never actually been put to the test in the real world.

Let those who are quick to judge our police understand that being a real pro at *Call of Duty* on a PlayStation is a vastly different proposition to having to draw a Glock and carry out a stoppage drill while in a life-threatening, high-pressure situation. It is with this in mind, cognisant that our police deserve every shred of assistance that we can give them, that I support this bill for the assurance it gives to the victims of crime and the acknowledgement that it gives to our police, including our four legged police, for a continuing job well done.

The bill's objectives are not contentious and can be summarised into a number of broad categories: a reduction in knife crime by expanding the banning notice to include an adult who unlawfully possesses a knife in a relevant public space; a new framework for parole decisions as they apply to multiple murderers and those who have murdered children; strengthening the no-body no-parole framework; assisting the Parole Board Queensland with its workload and risk assessment; improved administration for the Queensland Police Service and enhanced intel gathering; and the creation of an indictable offence for killing or injuring a Queensland Police Service or Corrective Services dog or a QPS horse.

To briefly expand on some of these points, changes to the no-body no-parole framework did attract some concerns from submitters around a perceived punitive nature or around restricted prisoners. However, the Queensland Police Service provided that so far as the victims are concerned there is an adverse impact around yearly parole applications coming from life sentenced prisoners and that the board's ability to not consider a parole application for a further three years was a balance between the life sentenced prisoner's ability to seek parole and the wellbeing of the victim's family.

The amendments to the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000, specifically clause 38, will expand the scope of banning notices for the possession of a knife. QPS advise that these amendments will further dissuade the unlawful possession of a knife in these public areas because these changes will be in addition to any court proceedings that may be commenced against a person. It is vital that we support police in their efforts to get as many blue shirts out into the community as possible, not only to engage in criminal investigations but also to help them as much as we can as they seek to get on the front foot and roll out more traditional, and I would argue equally as effective, proactive community policing. I believe that amendments to the Police Powers and Responsibilities Regulation clauses 39 and 44 will assist in that way. It seems an inefficient use of resources to require continuous police officer supervision for civilian employee monitoring surveillance devices. The community rightly hopes and expects that these blue shirts will be out and about performing frontline duties, preventing, investigating and responding to crime and not supervising non-sworn staff members.

Before concluding, I would like to expand on what I believe is a very important aspect of the bill that might otherwise go unnoticed or perhaps not afforded what I consider to be its due significance. The bill amends the Police Service Administration Act and the Corrective Services Act to create an indictable offence to wilfully and unlawfully kill or seriously injure a police dog, police horse or a corrective services dog. The offence is focused on single acts or assaults/retaliation on a police or corrective services animal as opposed to prolonged suffering or torture. I have never seen a police dog or horse in action, and I have no doubt that they are magnificent, but I have seen a corrective services dog at work more times than I can recall and they too are magnificent. These dogs and their highly trained and extremely professional handlers are an invaluable asset to public safety and the safety of custodial staff within our prisons. Whether providing an extra layer of security to an external escort or responding to a code yellow, these dogs are a sight to behold when they are in full flight.

It will surprise no-one to learn that adult prisons are violent and dangerous places. When a unit misbehaves there is nothing more reassuring for the staff than to hear on the radio that the Delta Unit is responding up the walkways. I should add that that reassurance applies only to the staff. For unruly prisoners, a corrective services GP dog commands instant respect. They have a wonderful calming effect when compliance is required from an unruly unit. Those dogs must be protected as they are often called to the most dangerous and violent incidents. The changes in the bill will offer them a new level of protection that I am confident the community expects. Hurting an animal is always repulsive; hurting an animal that is employed to protect the community is doubly so.

With the indulgence of the House, at this point I acknowledge the stupendous Woodford Correctional Centre dog handlers, the most effective and professional dog squad in the state. I thank them for their role in keeping my peers safe and for keeping me safe in my few decades on the job. To Shannon and the Delta Unit at Woodford, thank you very much, gentlemen. I commend this bill to the House, as I would commend any bill that supports the men and women of the Queensland Police Service who keep us safe on a 24/7 basis.