



Speech By  
**Jonty Bush**

**MEMBER FOR COOPER**

---

Record of Proceedings, 18 November 2021

**POLICE LEGISLATION (EFFICIENCIES AND EFFECTIVENESS) AMENDMENT  
BILL**

 **Ms BUSH** (Cooper—ALP) (5.38 pm): I rise in support of the Police Legislation (Efficiencies and Effectiveness) Amendment Bill 2021. As I stand to speak about police efficiencies and effectiveness, I am acutely aware of the demand on our police service not only in Queensland but also nationally right now. Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to just pause for a moment and share a personal reflection.

Coincidentally on this day 21 years ago our family made the decision to turn off the life support for my father, who then subsequently and immediately passed away. He was hospitalised with a subdural hematoma brought about through a domestic assault. I think it is important to share this whenever I speak about police or justice because the work that they do is so vital. As a victim of homicide—in fact, victims of any serious violent assault—it is with you forever. Even 21 years later, it still stays with you. I think that is really important to reflect on. I know that everyone in this House does really appreciate that.

Since that time I have had the opportunity to work with hundreds of men and women serving as Queensland police officers. I am not going to stand here and say that the service or the officers get it right all the time, but what I will say is that in my personal and professional experience our officers are highly professional. They are very courageous. They are devoted to community safety. I would speculate that they will be pleased to see the changes introduced through this bill which will enable them to prioritise what matters most in their area of work—which is keeping people safe.

There are very few professions where you are literally putting your life on the line when you walk out the door—and in fact I have worked with family members of serving officers who did not make it home. So it disappoints me greatly to see some of the social media occurring at the moment actively encouraging civil disobedience—actively encouraging people to occupy places in a deliberate attempt to apply pressure to the resources of Queensland police.

Our officers ought to be out there keeping victims of domestic and family violence safe. They ought to be investigating child protection matters. They ought to be operating random breath testing to keep our roads safe. They have better places to be than to be called out to a cafe to explain why someone is not being served their cappuccino. I share that because I really want to impress on the community the importance of our Police Service and keeping them freed up to do the work that they need to be doing.

The objective of the bill is to improve the delivery of policing services; reduce administrative processes; streamline police operations; increase productivity; and improve the detection, prevention and disruption of crime. Our Queensland Police Service is gold standard. It has kept Queenslanders safe during the pandemic. The incredible work and dedication of our frontline workers, including police, means Queensland is in a position to recover from the pandemic faster than other states.

Our response has been world leading and it is because of the work that the police are doing. It is the reason we can focus on our economic recovery, and this supports jobs and growth. While our police have supported us through the pandemic, we are supporting police with a record investment in police

personnel—over 2,000 additional police personnel. As we make this investment, it is also important that our police are given the tools and legislative framework so that they can do their jobs as efficiently as possible because we know this helps keep communities safe.

This bill enhances the way police do things on a number of fronts, freeing up valuable police time so that our officers can spend more time on the front line disrupting crime and bolstering community safety. It also builds on the strong accountability framework for police, further enhancing public confidence in our world-class police service. I will speak to some of the key proposals in this bill first and then outline the benefits that those changes will bring to Queensland.

The objective of the bill will be achieved through amendments to the Oaths Act to enable senior police officers to witness certain affidavits, in addition to a justice of the peace or a commissioner for declarations; enable the Commissioner of Police to authorise special constables and non-state police officers to exercise powers available to Queensland police officers; allow police to apply for an access order to a digital device in circumstances where the device was seized under a search warrant issued by a JP or where the device was otherwise lawfully seized; improve drug and alcohol-testing procedures for police officers involved in critical incidents; extend the permitted 'safe keeping' period under the Weapons Act 1990 to six months; improve the operation of the permanent firearms amnesty in relation to firearms anonymously surrendered to approved licensed firearms dealers; and enable authorised civilians to use evidentiary certificates for weapons classifications.

The key benefit of course, as others have spoken to, is the freeing up of thousands of hours of police time by allowing senior police officers to witness certain documents, rather than requiring police to attend before a JP or a commissioner for declarations. This is particularly important in regional and rural areas where the services of a JP are much harder to come by. In remote localities, the time frames for this work can expand out to an officer's entire shift. This amendment alone is estimated to save up to 22,000 hours of frontline officer time annually. These measures will ensure more hours are spent on the front line to better protect the community.

The bill expands the circumstances where a magistrate or Supreme Court judge may issue a digital access order requiring a person to provide a password or encryption code allowing police to access information stored on digital devices such as mobile phones. This will bolster the ability of the police to investigate crimes such as upskirting and revenge porn and builds on changes to the Criminal Code introduced by this government. We know digital devices are increasingly being used in such offences and it is vital police have the power to investigate and disrupt these crimes.

The bill will amend the Police Service Administration Act to enable the commissioner to allow non-state police officers to exercise powers held by QPS officers so that, where necessary, these officers who are primarily interstate police officers can carry out their duties effectively in Queensland because of their work location or the type of work they are involved in.

The bill will amend the Weapons Act to reduce the administrative burden in certain circumstances such as administration of deceased estates. The Weapons Act will also be amended to strengthen the current firearms amnesty framework to ensure the great results already seen in Queensland under the amnesty can continue.

The bill proposes amendments to the Police Service Administration Act relating to testing police officers and certain unsworn staff when they are involved in a critical incident. Accountability of our service and its officers is important.

What the committee heard was that the definition of critical incident is too limiting when the need for oversight of an officer's actions is legally required and necessary to ensure public confidence in police. We also heard that the act does not currently capture the situation where a police officer accidentally discharges a firearm in circumstances that caused or could have caused injury to a person. Clearly critical incidents create high amounts of scrutiny, as they should, and anxiety for everyone involved.

The committee heard that individual officers want to immediately assure everyone that they are not under the influence of any substance—just as much as the public are seeking that transparency and assurance. The proposed amendments will also provide for saliva testing of officers in these circumstances—a much more rapid and less invasive test to administer.

I want to thank the stakeholders who provided critical feedback to the committee, both through written and in-person submissions. As a result of stakeholder feedback, the bill was amended to restrict the level of police officer who can take an affidavit for prescribed documents to a 'senior police officer'. Additionally, the Queensland Police Service will develop policy to place additional obligations on senior police officers, including to turn their mind to any potential conflicts of interest—if the officer were involved in the investigation, for example.

The bill was also amended to limit the witnessing of objection to bail affidavits under the Bail Act and the Youth Justice Act by audiovisual link only to circumstances where it is not reasonably practicable to take the affirmation and witness documents in the physical presence of the officer.

Like I said, the Palaszczuk government is bolstering the Police Service and community safety not only through the historic investment in personnel and resources but also through efficiencies in the tools and frameworks police use in their daily duties.

I thank and acknowledge the work of my colleagues on the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee and the secretariat for doing another fantastic job. I commend the bill to the House.