




Speech By  
**Patrick Weir**

**MEMBER FOR CONDAMINE**

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

 **Mr WEIR** (Condamine—LNP) (6.16 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Police Powers and Responsibilities and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. According to the explanatory notes, the main objectives of the bill are to: reduce knife crime by expanding the police banning notice regime to apply to a person who unlawfully possesses a knife in a relevant public place; limit retraumatisation of victims' families and friends by introducing a new framework for parole decisions about a life sentenced prisoner who has committed multiple murders or who has murdered a child; strengthen the no-body no-parole framework to incentivise earlier prisoner cooperation to locate a homicide victim's remains; provide the Parole Board Queensland with greater flexibility to respond to increased workload and the risks different prisoners pose to community safety; create administrative and operational efficiencies for the Queensland Police Service, enhance intelligence gathering about dangerous drugs and ensure Commonwealth child sexual abuse offences are updated in Queensland legislation; and create indictable offences for wilfully and unlawfully killing or seriously injuring a Queensland Corrective Services dog or Queensland Police Service dog or horse, reflecting the seriousness of the offences in line with community expectations. I do not intend to speak to all of those but I will speak to some of them.

The bill introduces a discretion for the president of the Parole Board to declare that a restricted prisoner must not be considered for parole for up to 10 years. This would only apply to those who have committed the most heinous of crimes such as murder. We support this amendment. When someone commits the crime of murder they have crossed a line that excludes them from the right to freely mix in our society. It is a crime that deserves the heaviest of penalties being applied. This is recognised by the amendment proposed to the Corrective Services Act 2006 to extend the maximum period, from 12 months to three years, that a life sentence prisoner can be restricted from reapplying for parole after having their parole application refused by the board.

Whilst I support the amendments I have already mentioned, the amendment that extends the time frame by 60 days for the board to decide a parole application does raise some concerns. The explanatory notes state that the amendments are to provide the board with 'greater flexibility to respond to increased workload and the risks different prisoners pose to community safety'. I do not accept that. This is because of this government's incompetence in managing the Parole Board—pure and simple. This extension of time is so that the minister can stand and say that the Parole Board is meeting its time frames—which is something that it is failing to do now.

The minister has form in this regard, for there is a bill before the House—indeed, we have commenced debate on that bill—which extends the time frame for the weapons licensing board, because this was another service that was not meeting its time frames under this minister.

The concerns I have regarding this amendment are twofold. The Condamine electorate, like most others in the state, has a juvenile crime problem. We recently had a series of offences ranging from car theft to burglary, but the most frightening for the victims involved were home invasions. These offenders

came out from Toowoomba and were going around the towns surrounding Toowoomba such as Kingsthorpe, Oakey and Biddeston. It was a very terrifying time for residents. The police did a great job; they made a number of arrests and order was restored. It was the Oakey police that led that investigation. The problem is that these offenders were well known to police. As I said, the police did a great job but the problem is what happens from there.

Instead of a custodial sentence, all too often these offenders are given little more than a slap on the wrist and released to continue their antisocial behaviour. We know that our youth detention centres are overcrowded and understaffed, which means there is simply no room for some of the recidivist offenders, so they are released. This is another in a long list of failures by this minister. Not all offenders are recidivist offenders. For various reasons they can find themselves on the wrong side of the law and in custody. For these offenders rehabilitation is the ultimate goal, but this is being put at risk by the long waiting list to have their parole heard. Simply placing an extension on the time frame is not a solution to this problem.

I do support the banning notice that has been brought in for those who are in possession of a knife in a public place. Unfortunately, that crime is on the increase and we have heard some real-life stories from the Gold Coast about that. Knife crime has increased, particularly amongst young people. Often in a moment of rashness they can commit an act that will result in the taking of a life. There is no need to carry a knife in a public place unless you are a tradesman. Farmers often carry knives. As a farmer myself, I always had a pocketknife in my pocket. Unless you have a legitimate purpose there is no need to carry a knife. I understand there are protections for certain people who will still be able to carry them as a tool of their trade.

Dogs and horses do an incredible job with the police force. Dogs can often go in places where it is unsafe for an officer. We all love our horses. We know that a lot of retired racehorses find themselves in the Police Service, so they should be protected. As many in this House have said, we support our police officers. They do a wonderful job in very difficult circumstances most of the time, so we will support any legislation that will help them discharge their duties.