




Speech By  
**Ann Leahy**

**MEMBER FOR WARREGO**

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Record of Proceedings, 15 March 2022

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

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (12.03 pm): I rise to contribute to the Police Legislation (Efficiencies and Effectiveness) Amendment Bill 2021. Firstly, I want to thank all of the police officers across my electorate. There are many who serve in one-man stations. These officers have spent many cold nights in winter and hot days in summer on border crossings along the New South Wales and South Australian border—sometimes with very limited facilities. These officers have had two jobs: one has been the long shift away from their colleagues and their family on border control, and the other has been back in their communities dealing with the day-to-day policing matters. I am pleased that they are back in their communities and I thank them for the service they have done. Many did that on a lengthy basis and travelled a lot of kilometres to do it.

The objectives of the bill are: to improve the delivery of policing services; to reduce administrative processes; to increase productivity, although I do have a question about that when it comes to the Weapons Licensing section; to improve the detection, prevention and disruption of crime; and to free up valuable police frontline time by optimising existing systems and processes. The bill does this via a number of amendments which are predominantly administrative in nature. They relate to: authorising senior police officers to witness specific affidavits; allowing access orders for seized digital devices—and more and more digital devices are involved in crimes as more and more devices become available; providing the Queensland Police Service with alcohol and targeted substance testing; enabling special constables and non-state police officers to exercise the powers available to Queensland police officers; extending the time period for temporary possession of weapons to six months; allowing civilian technical officers to issue evidentiary certificates for the Weapons Act 1990; and enabling approved licensed firearms dealers to retain and deal with an anonymously surrendered firearm or prescribed thing. That is actually an improvement because occasionally people go through a home and find a firearm they just did not know was there, and they may not have a licence for it but they do need to surrender it, so I think that is a worthy amendment.

The job of our local police is becoming more difficult because of the increase in crime and also, particularly across my electorate, an increase in drug use. We are seeing an increase in youth crime which I think is very disappointing. I regularly get complaints from businesses and victims of youth crime who are horrified by the Labor government's soft-on-crime approach, particularly towards those recidivist offenders who are taking up so much police time and not actually receiving any penalty.

Police at the front line are being pushed to the limit—not only because of the increase in crime but also because of the additional COVID related duties they have had to perform. Despite all of this extra work and coupled with the inaction by the current Labor government, particularly when it comes to breach of bail, local police officers continue to work for the benefit of those they serve—the Queensland community. We owe them our gratitude.

There is a part of this bill that concerns me, and that is in relation to the amendments for extending the time period for the temporary possession of weapons to six months. Firearms are tools of the trade for many farmers and farm workers who operate feral animal control businesses and macropod harvesters. My constituents regularly raise complaints about the under-resourcing by this Labor government of the Weapons Licensing branch.

A constituent from St George raised with me the following issue of delays. He has been a licence holder for more than 20 years. His father was selected for the Australian Commonwealth team to compete in the Auckland games. He submitted an application for a category H licence, which was only approved after five letters to the minister and five months later. On contacting the Weapons Licensing branch to inquire as to the progress of his application, he was told that they were experiencing a significantly larger number of applications but not to be concerned as he was an existing weapons licence holder. However, it would take 16 to 20 weeks to get to the front of the queue. He has two questions for the minister. Firstly, does Weapons Licensing lack the resources to process applications? Secondly, why are existing licensed persons placed in the same queue as new applicants? I hope the minister will look at that because that constituent would like an answer from the minister, particularly given that he is a very passionate weapons licence holder.

Another farmer from Mitchell contacted my office about his category H licence application. He applied well before his licence expired as a precautionary measure against delays. Again, it took four months for his licence to be approved. It does not get any better because another farmer from Mitchell contacted me about his category D weapons licence application. Graham emailed to say—

I had lodged my application around the end of August last year with Weapons Licensing via email.

I didn't receive any confirmation that they had received it. So I made a call and was advised it was there.

My concerns are around the length of time it is taking to assess an application, when you go onto their website it advises that it could be 5 months before it is even assessed, this is absolutely ridiculous.

They are his words. He continued—

I have gone through the process of applying for this licence so that I have the right type of gun to eradicate feral pigs on my property as we breed lambs.

The impact from feral pigs on their lambing is significant. He has held a gun licence for many years and it is not as though he is applying for a new licence; it is an addition to the categories. Graham emailed me last week, some eight months after his initial application, to advise he finally received his licence. Eight months to get a licence for a tool of trade is not acceptable. These are unacceptable delays. These delays are happening under this government. They show that this government is failing law-abiding weapons licence holders. It is not a criticism of the staff of Weapons Licensing. They have seen a gradual erosion of the ability to provide the necessary service to their customers. A thorough and efficient weapons licensing system is critical to the proper management of firearms in this state. The government must ensure that this occurs. It is also critical for our food and fibre producers who have to use firearms to deal with pests and feral animals that kill and maim their livestock. Often there are no other options available to control pests. They have to have these licences.

I remind members opposite that the staff at the Weapons Licensing branch are dealing with people who are doing the right thing—people who want to comply with the law and are law-abiding citizens who simply use firearms as a tool in their day-to-day jobs. All this Labor government is doing is making it harder for those law-abiding people, causing delays and disappointment for those weapons licence owners who try very hard to do the right thing and who are extremely frustrated by the lack of resourcing from this government.

The minister cannot put his head in the sand and claim there are no problems with Weapons Licensing, because there are three constituents of mine who have recently experienced those problems firsthand. This police minister should step up and take responsibility for the failings that are occurring under his watch.