




Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

Record of Proceedings, 11 May 2022

POLICE SERVICE ADMINISTRATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (4.50 pm): I rise to contribute to the Police Service Administration and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. From the outset, I can advise that the LNP will not be opposing this bill but there are several issues that we will seek clarification on from the minister and other issues that we would ask the minister to consider. I would also like to put on record on behalf of all the members of the LNP my thanks and appreciation for the work our hardworking officers perform in protecting property and, even more importantly, people.

I note the main objectives of this bill are to modernise the legislative framework underpinning Protective Services and to increase efficiencies for police officers acting as public officials under the Forestry Act 1959, the Marine Parks Act 2004, the Nature Conservation Act 1992 and the Recreation Areas Management Act 2006—which is Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service legislation—and in identity card administration for these particular acts.

The bill enhances the efficiency and operability of Protective Services through: repealing two acts by relocating relevant provisions to the PPRA and the Police Service Administration Act 1990; amalgamating protective security officers and senior protective security officers into one group called protective services officers, or PSOs; consolidating and rationalising the security powers that may be exercised by police officers and PSOs in state buildings—including standardising the screening procedures for entrants to a state building, allowing police officers to demand the name and address from an entrant to a state building, authorising PSOs to direct a person who is trespassing or is disorderly in a state building to leave that place, and authorising PSOs to exercise the security powers currently performed by senior protective security officers in state buildings, such as the power to refuse entry to, or to remove, persons who do not meet security requirements and the power to detain entrants who are suspected of committing offences; authorising PSOs to seize contraband located in the performance of their duties; ensuring that the statutory protections available to police officers who are required to use force in the performance of their duties extend to PSOs; introducing a new offence provision prohibiting the impersonation of a PSO; clarifying that the offence to assault or resist a PSO includes obstructing a PSO; expanding the QPS alcohol and drug testing regime to apply to PSOs; and authorising PSOs to use body worn cameras.

Since 2018, over 120 police officers have been appointed as a public official under Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service legislation. I worked with a number of those officers throughout the course of my policing career. This yielded clear benefits not only in protecting public safety but also with respect to the protection of the natural and cultural values in protected areas, state forests, declared recreation areas and marine parks. Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service legislation requires the chief executive or the administering minister to issue appointed officers with identity cards that must be produced when exercising relevant powers under this legislation. This requirement is superfluous as police officers are already obliged under the PPRA to identify themselves or, if not in uniform, to produce their police identity card when exercising powers as a public official under Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service

legislation. The amendments in the bill will improve efficiencies through obviating the need for the chief executive or minister to issue identity cards to police officers or to arrange for the return of these cards when police officers cease to act as public officials for this legislation.

For almost 40 years now, the state government protective security service has worked to protect Queenslanders and Queensland government assets. This is done by way of onsite security, alarm monitoring and response, mobile patrols and the production of government identification cards. Among the buildings protected by Protective Services are facilities that touch the lives of Queenslanders each and every day—schools, government buildings, State Archives and the list goes on. From the perspective of the general public, Protective Services, as they are known, are the people who secure our courthouses, but there is much more to their role, including the monitoring of alarms in our own offices.

Almost six years ago, Protective Services was integrated into the Queensland Police Service for a variety of reasons. Despite that integration, the current situation is that Protective Services staff operate under what can only be described as a two-tier system. A Protective Services security officer has a range of powers under the act, such as requesting persons entering a state building to participate in screening, allowing an inspection of items carried in a person's pockets and asking people to park in a certain area or to deposit belongings in a certain place. A senior protective security officer has additional powers under the act, such as the power to require information from a person entering a state building, the power to require a person to leave a state building if they choose not to comply with screening, the power to seize proscribed items and the power to detain a person suspected of committing an offence.

As the committee found when examining this bill, Queensland is the only Australian jurisdiction that differentiates between protective security officers and senior protective security officers according to the powers they may exercise. This led the Queensland Police Service to conclude that protective security officers may only function effectively in the presence of a senior protective security officer. In addition to addressing this anomaly, the changes proposed in this bill will, according to the Queensland Police Service, further promote the integration of Protective Services into the Queensland Police Service. As a former police officer, I know that can only be a good thing.

The other advantage the bill will have is to provide options for those persons wishing to join the Queensland Police Service and for those transitioning out of the Queensland Police Service. I am sure no-one in this House would be surprised to hear me advocating for additional police officers. If the increased integration of Protective Services into the Queensland Police Service results in even one extra sworn officer, then we will have achieved a good result.


I welcome the inclusion of provisions to prohibit impersonation of a PSO and the clarification of offences relating to assaulting and resisting a PSO. Due to their role in protecting Queensland government assets and Queenslanders, we owe PSOs protections while performing that role in the same way that protections are offered to other relevant people. Other amendments contained in this bill relate to police officers performing duties relating to the Forestry Act, the Marine Parks Act, the Nature Conservation Act and the Recreation Areas Management Act. It is only logical to ensure that, when police are assisting other agencies, this cooperation is as seamless as possible.

I move onto the issues that I would like to see clarified by the minister. I would ask that the minister provide clarification during his reply into how protective services officer numbers will be reported in annual reports and other documents. The minister is well aware of my calls for additional police staff both sworn and unsworn, and I am sure the minister would agree that Queenslanders deserve transparency when it comes to police numbers. For those reasons I seek the minister's assurances that PSOs will be reported separately to ensure that transparency is in place.

My other query is in relation to what the committee called the provision of services on a commercial basis for a building other than a state building under a contract entered into by the state. The committee goes on to explain that officers would not be able to access the bill's updated regime of security powers in buildings other than state buildings and their precincts. While the use of powers may have been addressed, the concept of offering the services of Queensland Police Service employees on a commercial basis is not.

I am fully aware that police officers often perform duties, such as escorts of oversized vehicles, that are offered on a commercial basis, or special duties as they are known. This is due to their experience in ensuring safety and the powers granted to them under various acts. For those reasons the offering of those services on a commercial basis is logical. I would ask the minister to clarify what services performed by PSOs would be offered on a commercial basis, to whom they would be offered

and how those services would be charged. This is even more important based on the fact that, according to correspondence from the Queensland Police Service to the committee, the scope of area where PSOs can operate under this bill will rival those used in Victoria and South Australia.

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (5.32 pm), continuing: Queenslanders know that many areas of our state are currently under siege by juvenile offenders. Record rates of unlawful entry and unlawful use of a motor vehicle are virtually the norm in places like Townsville and Cairns. While Queenslanders will embrace any assistance in tackling crime, it is important to ensure that the role of sworn police officers is paramount in the prevention of and response to crime in this state.

Those of us on this side of the House will always support bills that improve the safety and security of Queenslanders. We also recognise that when we speak about a state owned building we are talking about buildings owned by Queenslanders. Where legislation is needed to improve safety and security we will give it our full and honest consideration. When the legislation and the reasons for it are sound we will support that legislation. In saying that, we reserve the right to ask questions in this House. I would ask the minister to respond to those questions that I have asked, questions around the adequacy of training for our protective security officers given additional powers previously only conferred upon the position of senior protective security officers. Adequate funding must be available for the provision of initial and ongoing training plus provision of equipment such as body worn cameras. I will be supporting this bill and I ask other members to do so in the interests of the safety and security of Queensland and all Queenslanders.