




Speech By
James Lister

MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS

Record of Proceedings, 15 March 2022

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

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (4.26 pm): I rise to speak on the Police Legislation (Efficiencies and Effectiveness) Amendment Bill 2021. I would like to state at the outset that I am the patron of the Inglewood gun club and the Warwick Pistol Club. I take the point that was made by the member for Traeger and the member for Hinchinbrook that it is easier to own a category H firearm in Brisbane than in Birdsville. I note that the minister is in the chamber and I know he is very chummy with his local gun club. They come to Warwick and compete from time to time. It is the case that they have much easier access to a category H firearm than somebody in the bush who might also need one.

We have heard a great deal about the failings in the Weapons Licensing branch. I get a lot of complaints from constituents, from fine upstanding people who have been on the land for generations and are of impeccable character, who have had their category H firearms licences taken off them. One of them was Lawrence Springborg. He had one for 30-odd years as a primary producer. It is ironic that, once he left the parliament and became a primary producer probably seven days a week instead of two, he had his firearm taken off him on the grounds that he did not satisfy the requirements anymore. His occupational requirement had actually improved, his character remained as impeccable as it always was yet it was taken off him. These sorts of arbitrary decisions—which mercifully we have seen overturned at QCAT to some extent—give rise to a great deal of upset, angst and depression amongst people in my community who get put through the wringer regarding firearms licences.

I listened to what the member for Gympie said earlier about the specious grounds on which people are being put through the wringer when it comes to renewing firearms licences—someone with diabetes, someone with postnatal depression, someone who had fallen over and, I understand from what the member for Gympie said, had to justify that it was due to their glasses and not something else. This is madness.

I note that the minister took personal offence to a few remarks earlier. I will say something which I feel there is no prospect he could take offence at—the buck stops with the minister. How is that? If he does not object to that, then it means that not only does the buck stop with the minister but so do these licence applications. There are 8,000 of them, according to Graham Park, the president of the Shooters Union. When we see an expansion of the period of time that a firearm can be held temporarily from three months to six months, this is more about adapting the regulations and the law to the poor performance of the Weapons Licensing branch—the performance of which is the responsibility of the minister. The department under his administration is letting down firearms owners throughout Queensland. It is disgraceful that it takes months and months to have a renewal of a firearms licence completed.

A very fine, upstanding member of my community—I will not mention this person's name because I have not cleared with them whether they would like to hear it or not—had for many years had firearms for sporting shooting purposes. On the most recent occasion he submitted all of the required

documentation. The Weapons Licensing branch asked for more, which he supplied by the given email address. He was told sometime down the track that none of the material had been received and that his firearms licence had been cancelled.

I make no reflection on the staff of the Weapons Licensing branch as individuals, but the functions of the branch are a disgrace in inefficiency, with the most appalling customer service. Basil Fawly gives better service than the Weapons Licensing branch. It is a very common complaint in my electorate that good firearms owners—good people who need the firearms for sporting purposes or for occupational purposes—are treated like criminals. People who have had no cause to be seen in that light are put through the wringer. As the buck does stop with the minister, I suspect the minister has simply said, 'Just don't approve them. Don't come to me and say, "I need an amendment to the act." Just don't do it. Just make it as hard as possible.'

Mr RYAN: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member is making a very serious allegation. Unless the member has some evidence to back it up, he should withdraw that. In any event, I take personal offence at the matter and I ask that it be withdrawn.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Bush): Member for Southern Downs?

Mr LISTER: I withdraw. The buck stops with the minister. The minister is responsible for what happens. Good firearm owners in this state have been treated very poorly indeed. It leaves open the question: has the Weapons Licensing branch been told, 'Don't tell us how it needs to be done. Just find ways to make it as hard as possible for firearm owners'—good, lawful people who have used firearms for many years—

Mr Ryan: You be very careful.

Mr LISTER: I take the interjection from the minister to be very careful. I am very careful, and so are the many firearm owners who are routinely disadvantaged by the department under his stewardship.

I would like to move on to the question of crime. We have heard much debate in the chamber today regarding crime and the various positions of the various major parties on that. I heard the member for Thuringowa talk about how the LNP has failed in terms of crime. I would suggest that if the member for Thuringowa were to go to Goondiwindi or Warwick in my electorate, where there are growing amounts of crime, they may well tar and feather him because everybody there knows that we need breach of bail restored as an offence for youth offenders. It is not good enough that they are let off over and over again.

I want it to be on the record that my view is that someone will eventually be hurt or killed as a result of the growth in crime. People may feel that they have to take matters into their own hands to protect themselves, and that would be a tragedy, but I want to say now—and I have put in writing to the minister in the past my concern that that will happen; I believe the mayor of Goondiwindi has done so as well—that we need—

Mr Ryan: The police responded.

Mr LISTER: I take the interjection from the minister saying the police responded. Yes, we had some mounted police in Goondiwindi which was of great benefit, but they are not there anymore. We need a 24-hour station in Goondiwindi, but we do not have one. I have made a point of recounting on many occasions in this House the problems of crime in Goondiwindi and Warwick and how legislative change is necessary, but the government resists this. The government obviously is dominated by the bleeding-heart left who say, 'Offenders are victims and we can't put them away. You just have to tolerate the crime until we have solved the social problems which have given rise to it.'

Ms Boyd interjected.

Mr LISTER: I take the interjection from the member for Pine Rivers. Has she ever been to Goondiwindi?

Ms Boyd: Yes.

Mr LISTER: Has she walked the streets in Goondiwindi and talked to them about—

Ms Boyd: Yes.

Mr LISTER: I doubt that very much.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Lui): Member, direct your comments through the chair.

Mr LISTER: I will continue to put my remarks through the chair.

Ms Boyd interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Pine Rivers, order!

Mr LISTER: There is one point I want to make about the provisions of this bill regarding the special constables and the status and powers they are given when coming to Queensland. As I represent a border electorate—I have about 400 kilometres of border country and represent towns like Texas, Goondiwindi, Stanthorpe and Warwick—I can say that it is a matter of importance to them. I welcome any improvement to the ability to give special powers to interstate police and—

Mr Ryan: Finally you recognise the issue.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr LISTER: I have not finished speaking yet.

Mr Ryan interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, Minister!

Mr LISTER: I have not finished making my observation yet, so I welcome that. I also say that we need a cross-border commissioner, which has been LNP policy for the last two elections. The local police and the local authorities, be it local government, health or whatever, are saying that we need to have a cross-border commissioner, just like New South Wales does, and I will continue to advocate for that for as long as I can.