




Speech By
Joan Pease

MEMBER FOR LYTTON

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**POLICE SERVICE ADMINISTRATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT
BILL**

 **Ms PEASE** (Lytton—ALP) (12.12 pm), continuing: Given that today is International Nurses Day, I want to acknowledge the great work that all of our frontline nursing staff do and thank them for their tremendous care and support of people in our community. I was fortunate enough to meet with some of the nurses and midwives who were on the precinct this morning, and my young niece is a nurse as well. I know what hardworking members of our community they are. It is not a job for these people; it is a vocation. They serve and they love what they do in taking care of people, so I thank them very much for their service.

Returning to the bill before the House, when I finished last night I was acknowledging the great service by Queensland Police Service, QFES and SES workers and also the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service officers. Unfortunately for those people who work in those services, they see the very worst of people at very difficult times because the people they are assisting have generally experienced some tremendously difficult times. I also thank them for their ongoing service and kindness and care to those people in our community who are experiencing hard times.

All workers have a duty to take reasonable care for their own health and safety and not adversely affect the safety of others. Unfortunately, we have become a society constantly looking for someone to blame for our behaviour or misfortune, even when it is no-one's fault other than our own, and too often we look to place the blame at the feet of someone else. In every workplace it is the responsibility of the employee as well as the employer to ensure safety. At the end of the day, we must be confident that the employee will return home safely, and that is everyone's right.

To ensure a safe workplace, it makes sense for the sensible and/or prescribed use of alcohol and drugs. Drug related workplace accidents, lost productivity and absenteeism cost Australian businesses billions of dollars every year. The use of drugs or alcohol can affect the individual and put at risk the welfare of work colleagues and those with whom the individuals interact. Drug and alcohol testing allows employers to protect both the employees and the business by mitigating the risks of employees using recreational drugs and alcohol. It is proposed in this bill that the alcohol and drug testing regime be expanded to include protective services officers.

The Police Service Administration Act 1990 allows for alcohol testing and targeted alcohol and drug testing of police officers, watch house officers and staff working in critical areas. Protective services officers are authorised to use force in certain circumstances and unfortunately the use of force on another can result in dire consequences. Currently, any investigation involving a critical incident involving a protective services officer would be hampered as these officers may not be subject to an alcohol and drug testing regime. The rationale for alcohol and drug testing of QPS staff ensures that the health, welfare and safety of QPS members is supported, public confidence in the QPS is promoted and the integrity of the QPS is enhanced.

Alcohol impairment has a domino effect, resulting in low productivity, increased down time, risky behaviours and a huge impact on safety which would generally increase safety risks. Therefore, employers must minimise all factors that may lead to harm. Drug and alcohol testing in the workplace traditionally has been mainly implemented by industries where drug affected employees pose a serious safety risk to themselves and others such as transport and mining or construction. With reports showing that two in three users use some form of drugs at work, including illicit ones, the need for drug screening is fast becoming universal.

Contrary to popular belief, random testing does not aim to catch offenders; instead, it is actually a means of preventing drug abuse by deterring employees from using illicit substances. Random selection is effective in curbing drug use since employees will not know beforehand if they will be tested. It is a means by which the employee and employer can be protected, so it is a very important procedure to make sure that the staff are protected, the employer is protected and our community is protected.

I want to acknowledge all of the great protective services officers taking care of our buildings. The white shirts, as they are commonly referred to, do a great job. For a period of time my daughter was a federal police officer and worked as a federal protective services officer. Although that is a slightly different role than the protective services officers in Queensland, it is a similar job in that they put themselves at risk and put themselves on the front line, so what we can do as a society to protect them to ensure that they are looked after and respected in our community is paramount and something that good government should do. That is why I am really proud to be able to rise in support of the Police Service Administration and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2021.