




Speech By
Joseph Kelly

MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES

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INSPECTOR OF DETENTION SERVICES BILL

 **Mr KELLY** (Greenslopes—ALP) (11.54 am): I rise to speak in support of the Inspector of Detention Services Bill 2021. It represents another good reform by the Palaszczuk Labor government. Labor has always led the way on reforms to our criminal justice system, including the sad but necessary function of government to at times detain people. This is not done because we are soft on crime, which is a barb that is often thrown our way by those opposite. No, we do it because we understand the basic fundamental human rights of all people. We know the burden of imprisonment often falls on the most disadvantaged in our society, and on this side of the House we seek to represent all Queenslanders.

Our government has taken great strides to address areas of disadvantage and removing those areas of disadvantage will always be our first goal. We do this by creating employment—and we saw some good numbers just two weeks ago. Giving people meaningful jobs and employment means they have capacity to care for themselves and their families. We do it by investing in schools. We have done it by investing in youth justice programs—over half a billion dollars since we were elected—reintroducing court diversion programs cut by previous governments; investing in sporting and cultural activities; investing in improved mental health services; committing to the 140 recommendations from the *Not now, not ever* report; and continuing to roll out the Skilling Queenslanders for Work program. I see that program in my electorate taking people who are affected by domestic violence, long-term unemployment, mental health issues. People who perhaps might eventually end up in the criminal justice system instead end up as a barista or a tradesperson. That is a much better path I think we would all agree.

We know that, sadly, there will always be a need for places of detention. In my role as a nurse at times I participated in interfering with people's liberty, more on the mental health side of things. I have also had the opportunity to care for prisoners who have been shackled to hospital beds while I have been caring for them. Therefore I know how important it is that when we interfere with people's liberty and when we detain people, we put in place the maximum number of safeguards for these people. This bill delivers on our commitment to ensuring these places of detention are run humanely.

By establishing the Inspector of Detention Services we are going to facilitate greater transparency and accountability. From my perspective the most powerful aspect of this role will be the capacity to have an ongoing discussion about opportunities to improve various aspects of detention. It is a real systems approach, which I think in the long term yields much more proactive and much more positive outcomes for our society.

I would like to thank the many people and organisations who took time to make submissions. I read and noted with great interest the submissions that were made by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service, Sisters Inside and several other groups that made submissions in relation to the role of the inspector in interacting with vulnerable people including First Nations people, people with a disability and children.

It is absolutely undeniable that there are far too many First Nations people in prison. I know from my time as the chair of SPELD, an organisation committed to helping young people and adults with learning differences, that the number of people in prison who are illiterate or who have intellectual

disabilities is very high. It is important that we ensure that these groups are properly supported. I note the department's response about the inspector's capacity to engage specialist staff when interacting with people from these vulnerable groups.

Like many Australians, I have been shocked and sickened at times by the revelations about problems in our correctional facilities. These problems are problems that seem to have existed in every single state and territory of our fine Commonwealth. It is good that Queensland is now moving into line with other jurisdictions to establish this role. I think it is a real sign of good governance that the Attorney-General is the minister responsible for this bill, giving it independence from police and corrections.

I think we all in this place hope that this bill leads to greater transparency, accountability, systems improvement and, most importantly, humane treatment. I reiterate: our first goal as a Labor government is always to remove areas of disadvantage and to empower people so that we can avoid having to detain people or interfere with their liberty. I commend the bill to the House.