




Speech By
Hon. Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

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POLICE SERVICE ADMINISTRATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities) (12.27 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Police Service Administration and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. I extend my thanks to the members of the Economics and Governance Committee, led by its chair, the member for Logan, for their examination of this bill. This bill continues the work of the Palaszczuk government in bringing efficiencies to the Public Service, in this case the hardworking members of the Protective Services Group. Every time you enter this building, whether it be in sitting weeks, for committee hearings or bringing visitors into the chamber, you are always greeted with a smile and a friendly nod by those men and women who do a sterling job in this place. I commend them for their efforts. This bill will complement their service and their credibility as decent people who protect us on a daily basis.

The bill also brings efficiencies to the Forestry Act 1959, which falls under my portfolio. This bill will amend that act to remove the requirement for a police officer to produce an identity card while acting as a forestry officer. This would only apply if the officer were in uniform. If they are not, then the officer would still be obliged to produce identification if they are exercising their powers as a public official. This is just a common-sense measure. If an officer is in uniform they are clearly identified as such and should not need to produce further identification.

This bill also clarifies some procedures for Forestry officers when going about their job. In particular, section 84E gives a Forestry officer the power to stop or move a vehicle or vessel. The amendments would require the Forestry officer to identify themselves when giving the direction and immediately provide a form of identification to the person of interest. The bill further simplifies what can be used as identification, including wearing their departmental uniform or activating lights on a vehicle displaying a logo of the department. These are all sensible measures to, firstly, improve efficiencies for Forestry or police officers exercising their powers under the Forestry Act; secondly, it will give the wider community confidence in dealing with public servants doing their job to protect our forestry assets.

Of course, the government consulted appropriately on this legislation and feedback received was taken into account in finalising the bill. That is a hallmark of the Palaszczuk government. It is a process that the government always undertakes and I am proud to see the outcomes delivered in the report on this bill. I note there were no reservations raised either by the committee or external stakeholders about these particular provisions.

As the Minister for Police and Emergency Services noted in his introductory speech, this bill modernises the legislation governing Protective Services. Its 400 staff are responsible for the management of security services across state schools and 80 government buildings, including our courts. Protective Services has a very proud history and thousands of public servants owe a debt of gratitude to the men and women of Protective Services for keeping them safe as they go about their work. In 2016, Protective Services was incorporated into the Queensland Police Service in recognition that both agencies are dedicated to providing safety and security across Queensland. This bill will

streamline the powers of protective services officers by: removing the distinction between protective security officers and senior protective security officers; consolidating and rationalising the powers of protective services officers and the police officers operating alongside them in state buildings; clarifying and expanding offence provisions; and authorising protective services officers to use body worn cameras.

In its submission to the committee inquiry, the QPS noted that the current security environment in Australia is complex and protest activity, particularly in recent times, has escalated. I want to reflect on a period when I was a senator in the Commonwealth parliament. A former coalition senator from New South Wales entered an estimates hearing through what one would have thought was good security and produced a mock pipe bomb to identify the concerns of the security officers at that time.

Mr Ryan: In front of the Australian Federal Police Commissioner.

Mr FURNER: That is correct. No doubt that demonstrated what was, at that time, a deficiency in and concerns about the security at the greatest Parliament House in this country. Notwithstanding that, today we are making progress in terms of tightening up our security and making sure that we as parliamentarians, our staff and the many hundreds of other employees who come through these doors and those of all government buildings are protected in appropriate and safe environments and this bill achieves those outcomes.

Members would agree that quite regularly we see protest activity outside this House, notably last sitting week when hundreds of people were actively engaging in disrupting this parliament. While we are fortunate to live in a democracy where people are allowed and encouraged to express their views in a peaceful way, sometimes those protests can turn violent. There is also a wider community expectation that people are entitled to be safe in their workplace. Therefore, it is only right that this bill allows for a uniform set of powers for our protective services officers so that they can ensure the security of government buildings.

I note that the Queensland Law Society has reservations about the proposal to give protective services officers access to the same powers as senior protective security officers, mainly due to a perceived lack of adequate training. I welcome the QPS's commitment to providing adequate resources and training to officers in Protective Services so that those powers are exercised correctly. The committee also heard concerns about clarifying the use of force by protective services officers in removing someone or preventing that person from entering a state building. This bill stipulates reasonable use of force and, again, I am confident protective services officers will be given the right training by their colleagues in the QPS. The bill also makes it clear that the use of body worn cameras by protective services officers is lawful.

We live in a multicultural society and it is not altogether uncommon that, in the course of carrying out their duties, our protective services officers provide assistance to or otherwise interact with people for whom English is not a first language. This bill will authorise protective services officers to employ assistants, such as interpreters, to help them efficiently carry out their work while providing appropriate protections from civil liability for those assistants.

The bill makes it an offence to assault or obstruct a protective services officer acting in accordance with his or her duties. Obviously such an assault would be abhorrent and it is vital we create the additional deterrent to such attacks that this provision of the bill outlines.

The bill also gives authority for protective services officers to make directions or requirements by inserting a new offence of contravening a directive or requirement of a protective services officer. This bill provides appropriate protections for people who might be subject to directions issued by protective services officers by ensuring they have an opportunity to comply with those directions. Under the bill, a protective services officer can give a person a verbal direction or requirement. If the person fails to comply, the protective services officer must warn the person that it is an offence to fail to comply with the direction unless the person has a reasonable excuse. The protective services officer must then give the person a further reasonable opportunity to comply with the direction or requirement that has been issued.

Like our dedicated Queensland police officers, our protective services officers perform important duties to keep Queenslanders and Queensland government critical infrastructure safe. I thank our protective services officers for their service and for the work they do for all Queenslanders.

As an aside, I would also like to congratulate the Premier and the Attorney-General on this week's announcement about the action the Palaszczuk government is taking to criminalise coercive control. As a long-standing White Ribbon Ambassador, this is an issue that is extremely close to my heart. I congratulate both of my cabinet colleagues for having pushed forward those processes.

Once again, this bill appropriately inserts provisions to protect us as parliamentarians and all state government officers. I commend the bill to the House.