




Speech By
Hon. Mark Ryan

MEMBER FOR MORAYFIELD

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POLICE LEGISLATION (EFFICIENCIES AND EFFECTIVENESS) AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

 **Hon. MT RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services) (4.39 pm), in reply: I take this opportunity to thank members of the House for their contributions to the Police Legislation (Efficiencies and Effectiveness) Amendment Bill. We have all heard of the courageous and collective might of our first responders in protecting Queenslanders in the worst floods to hit the south-east in living memory. Tragically, 13 members of our community were lost, including one of our own, SES volunteer Merryl Dray. Many lives were saved, though—the positive.

Today in this House we heard of the heroics of our first responders putting the lives of others before their own. That is what they do every day. Our police and emergency services personnel, our firefighters and their elite swiftwater rescue crews, our State Emergency Service and Rural Fire Service volunteers, Polair, the Water Police—all of them collectively were on the ground, in the air, in the water reaching out a lifesaving hand to their fellow Queenslanders.

It is this government which backs each and every one of our first responders. We back the police with the laws they need to keep the community safe and we back the police with record police budgets year after year. In our record \$2.6 billion police budget we are rolling out more than 2,000 extra police personnel, which includes an additional 1,450 sworn police officers. That equates to, as determined by the commissioner, at least 150 additional sworn police in every police region. There is an extra 300 civilian staff to support frontline policing. We are going to establish a new Policelink call centre in Townsville with 50 Policelink call takers. There is 125 additional police liaison officers and school based support officers, and an additional 100 frontline support personnel, which also includes, importantly, at least 10 additional injury management officers for the police wellbeing centre.

We are rolling out more police resources including more than 12,000 integrated load-bearing ballistic vests in a nation first, more than 5,000 additional QLITE iPads, 4,500 additional body worn video cameras to bring the total fleet to more than 12,000, 250 additional police vehicles and more mobile Police Beats so that police are out and about and more visible in their local communities. This was certainly the case during the floods with Police Beats deployed to the worst affected communities, reaching out to help and support those communities.

We have our \$300 million police infrastructure pipeline, which is delivering new and upgraded police facilities right across Queensland including in places like Cairns. I note in today's *Cairns Post* local businesses were commending the planned establishment of a new police facility in west Cairns and there is other Palaszczuk government investment in places like Townsville at Kirwan with the new \$30 million facility.

In a recent investment there are three new helicopters to patrol the south-east as part of a 10-year contract with Surf Life Saving Queensland from 2024, which will take us through to the Olympics and beyond. This new longer term contract will also save police because the new helicopters provide vastly improved safety, technology, cameras and night-vision capability. This new arrangement will also deliver Australia's first Bell 429 training simulator, and there is more with remote piloted aircraft for Cairns and Townsville.

It is about more reinforcements for the police and added protection for the community. Because we have had COVID and we have had floods, the Palaszczuk government is delivering an economic plan to keep us on the road to recovery. The efficiency measures in this bill will enable more police to spend more time helping and supporting their local communities.

I will now take a moment to address some of the issues raised by members during debate on the bill. Some members asked about the amendments to special constables and non-state police officers. This bill allows special constables and non-state police officers to exercise the powers of a Queensland police officer under the provisions approved by the Police Commissioner. As a result, this will create operational efficiencies and remove any uncertainty about the role of officers from other jurisdictions when they come to Queensland to assist with major events or disasters. It is a safeguard and it is all about being able to boost the policing response if required. It is an arrangement which exists right across the nation.

Special constables will also be subject to the same oversight as Queensland police officers. They must comply with Queensland law while in our jurisdiction. They must comply with the safeguards provided under the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act and through any national arrangements. They may be investigated and subject to disciplinary processes in their home jurisdiction.

I note there was also some commentary about the amendments to the Weapons Act in this bill. That extends, for instance, to the period for the temporary safekeeping of firearms. New licence application time frames have changed over recent times. I am advised by the Queensland Police Service that this is largely due to the effects of the global health pandemic on the workforce and an increase in the number of applications being made. I am advised by the QPS that they are working on a number of strategies including recruiting more client service officers and a new online tool to reduce the number of incorrect or incomplete applications coming through to the Weapons Licensing branch.

A number of members also raised the need for more police and more police resources. Madam Deputy Speaker, as you know, this government is delivering more police and more police resources including our more than 2,000 police personnel. Of course, we recall what those opposite promised at the last election. They would be delivering less than half that amount. How quickly and conveniently they rewrite history, even recent history. The government, the Labor Party, is the party that when in government boosts resources and backs our police. Those opposite, when in government, cut police resources and slashed police budgets. They have a very poor track record.

I do acknowledge—and I will particularly note—the member for Coomera for his very positive feedback about this government's investment in the new \$6 million Pimpama police facility and the extra policing resources for the northern Gold Coast. I look forward to joining the Police Commissioner next week to officially open that outstanding new facility.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr RYAN: I acknowledged him. He was invited. He was on the invite list. I invite all local members. Unlike a previous government that was petty and did not invite non-government members to official openings, I make sure every single local member is invited to official openings—every single one.

Mrs Frecklington: This would be the only minister who does it if he does.

Mr RYAN: I do. The member opposite is an example. She can say that I do. There were three openings in her electorate.

I take this opportunity to thank members of the Firearms Advisory Forum for working closely with me on amendments to the firearms amnesty under this bill. Their input and advice are valued and respected. In relation to the weapons amnesty amendments in this bill, the president of the Firearms Dealers Association of Queensland has said—and he is happy for me to quote him—

The firearms dealers industry has worked closely with the government to ensure these changes are in the best interests of our members.

I am pleased with where these changes have landed.

We have always been a willing partner, working with government to ensure weapons don't end up in the wrong hands because our members are responsible and remain committed to community safety.

And we believe the framework in place in Queensland is the best in the nation.

I thank him for his comments. I thank him also, as well as all members of the Weapons Advisory Forum for their cooperation and participation in this process.

May I take this opportunity to acknowledge all the hard work and dedication of members of the Queensland Police Service who work tirelessly day in, day out to ensure the safety of Queenslanders. I am going to embarrass one particular officer now. I would like to thank Senior Sergeant Bob Utz from the legislation branch. He is sitting in the bill box there. I am told that this bill is known within the Queensland Police legislation branch as 'Bob's bill'. I will get to that in a minute. In Bob's bill, he will be very proud to see, there will be significant reforms and legacy including: enhancing the ability of police to investigate serious crimes by enabling them to access evidence kept on digital devices such as mobile phones; supporting efforts to enhance firearm safety; efficiencies that will free up police to spend more time on the front line, enabling senior police to witness affidavits, which is particularly important for officers in rural and remote areas. This will ensure that the need for police officers to locate a JP will be removed, which will deliver significant time savings for the police—in fact, more than 20,000 hours of additional officers' time annually.

There will, of course, be appropriate checks and balances and safeguards in place to ensure the integrity of this reform. There is also reform in this bill to expand the circumstances where a magistrate or Supreme Court judge may issue a digital access order requiring a person to provide a password or encryption code that in turn enables police to access information stored on a digital device such as a mobile phone. This would apply, for example, to circumstances involving offences which are colloquially known as upskirting or revenge porn. There are also amendments to streamline the operation of the permanent firearms amnesty.

I will now go back to Bob. Senior Sergeant Bob Utz approaches the end of a long and distinguished policing career that will span 40 years of service to Queensland. I think more courageously, Bob has dedicated 18 years of this career to the legislation branch. Well done, Bob! Bob's great expertise and knowledge have been instrumental in the development of this bill and many other bills. In fact, long after Bob's retirement these laws will continue to have a positive impact on the people of Queensland. Bob, I take this opportunity on behalf of all of us to wish you well in retirement and thank you very much for your service to the people of Queensland. Well done, Bob! Community safety is paramount to the Palaszczuk government and this bill delivers on our unwavering commitment to ensuring Queensland is a safe place to live, work and visit. I commend the bill to the House and I encourage all members to support Bob's bill.