




Speech By
Hon. Mark Ryan

MEMBER FOR MORAYFIELD

Record of Proceedings, 12 May 2022

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

Second Reading

 **Hon. MT RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services) (4.33 pm), in reply: I would like to start by thanking all members who have made a contribution to the debate on the Police Service Administration and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. This bill is pivotal for the Protective Services Group in the succession of transformations that this very hardworking group is undertaking. The first significant moment occurred with the Queensland Police Service assuming responsibility of the Protective Services Group. This aligned the Protective Services Group within an agency that is dedicated to providing safety for the public within Queensland. From that point Protective Services has moved from strength to strength through a range of root and branch improvements that has enhanced this group. This has included changes to all facets of Protective Services, including its recruitment practices, officer training, the provision of equipment, right through to policies and procedures. This bill plays its part in this process by improving the legislative framework that Protective Services relies upon.

I will take the opportunity now to address some of the issues raised by members during the debate. During the debate some members asked about how protective services officer numbers will be recorded in annual reports. The bill maintains the current provisions that specify that protective services officers are staff members within the Queensland Police Service, consequently the protective services officers will continue to be recorded as such. Police officer numbers will continue to be recorded separately in its current form. In short, there will be no confusion in determining the number of sworn police officers as compared to other Queensland Police Service staff, which includes protective services officers.

During the debate we heard some members, including the member for Bundaberg as well as others, talk about police numbers. The government has a very strong record when it comes to police numbers. For those opposite to raise police numbers is a bit dodgy. During their time in government 110 police officers lost their jobs. Hundreds of important frontline support officers who supported those police officers also lost their jobs. There was a big contrast at the last election. We went to the people of Queensland with a very clear plan about growing the police service by an historic number: over 2,000 extra police personnel by 2025. Those opposite went to the election with a commitment to not deliver as many as that; essentially to slash the number of police that our commitment would have delivered. Hundreds of officers would not now be part of the Queensland Police Service if those opposite had won the last election.

Mr Harper: And sell our North Queensland academy!

Mr RYAN: I take that interjection from the member for Thuringowa, a very strong advocate for Townsville and facilities in Townsville to support the police front line. When it comes to talking about police numbers, while those opposite are a bit dodgy on it, we are very solid, and we have the track record to support our solid commitment to the people of Queensland and the Queensland Police Service.

Some members also raised during the debate what security services will be offered by the Protective Services Group on a commercial basis to parties other than government, who those parties would be and how those services would be charged. I will go into this a little bit more because this is just a continuation of the existing arrangements under the current legislation. It reflects an arrangement that exists because of the nature of some government agencies. Some government agencies are separate independent statutory authorities, such as Legal Aid Queensland, so there has to be a commercial arrangement in place between the provision of the services that protective security officers provide and those agencies.

Currently the Protective Services Group is tasked with providing security services to state buildings. There is no plan to divert the attention of the Protective Services Group away from this important function. This government does not plan to utilise protective services officers for contractual work for private industry, but it is important to note that the Protective Services Group provides services to statutory bodies, as I have already mentioned, including Legal Aid Queensland. This amendment is simply a continuation of the existing provisions in the State Buildings Protective Security Act and allows these current commercial arrangements with those statutory authorities to continue. It is appropriate that this bill maintains this provision. As I have mentioned, it is incumbent on us to ensure that our organisations can act dynamically now and into the future. This provision creates a degree of futureproofing for Protective Services Group services to be offered to agencies.

Various members of the House have asked whether protective services officers will receive adequate training and funding. Current serving security officers have already been trained about the security powers that may be exercised in state buildings. The Protective Services Group considers that an additional one-week training period is sufficient to ensure those officers can act proficiently as protective services officers. New applicants wishing to become protective services officers will be required to successfully complete five weeks of initial training. That initial training includes components such as operational skills and tactics, corporate strategy and induction, technical knowledge, security legislation, policy and procedures, skills and capability training. In addition to that initial training, there will be opportunities to undertake further training and mandatory requirements to ensure that essential skills are consistently maintained.

Protective services officers will receive training equivalent to that of the current senior protective security officer, essentially reflecting an uplift in capability for the entire workforce. The Queensland Police Service is confident that that level of training will suitably prepare protective services officers to perform their duties. The Queensland Police Service is similarly confident that the level of funding for protective services officers is appropriate. Protective Services relies on a cost-recovery model to meet all operating costs. Protective Services does not intend to change its fees for the services it provides as a consequence of the proposed amendments. All costs will be met through existing budgets.

Finally, during the debate in the chamber there has been comment that if the increased integration of protective services officers into the Queensland Police Service results in even one extra sworn officer then we will have achieved a good result. I acknowledge the member for Burdekin who said that. We do have some good news about that as we are already seeing that career pathway, both at the front end and at the back end, which is important. We are already seeing the Protective Services Group being well integrated into the Queensland Police Service and providing that career pathway for sworn officers.

As an example, the Protective Services Group has been working with police recruiting to ensure that their pool of applicants for protective services officer positions is of the highest quality. Moreover, in circumstances where an applicant for police recruiting fulfils the selection criteria but is identified as a person requiring more life experience, there is an existing practice whereby police recruiting provides a list of those applicants to the Protective Services Group, and those applicants are invited to apply to become a protective services officer to develop the necessary life skills to then support their application to become a sworn officer of the Queensland Police Service. That practice has resulted in a number of protective security officers being successful in the police officer recruitment selection process at a later time.

During the debate, some comments were also raised about the training for protective services officers. One member said that he had concerns that protective services officers will not be adequately trained in the use of force if reasonably necessary in the course of their duties. Both protective security officers and senior protective security officers are already trained by the Queensland Police Service in those operational skills, as protective security officers are routinely relied upon to assist senior protective security officers to exercise their duties, which on occasion may require the use of force. As I have already indicated, protective services officers will be trained initially upon their induction and periodically throughout their career in operational skills. Those officers go through the same curriculum as serving police officers do for the accoutrements they use. I am very confident that the training they are provided by the Queensland Police Service will allow them to perform their role proficiently.

The member for Maiwar raised concerns about amendments in the bill that will allow a direction to leave to be given to trespassers or to a person who is acting inappropriately in a state building. Currently, senior protective security officers and police officers may use force to remove, from a state building, a person who has no good and lawful reason for being there. Although a police officer or a senior protective security officer may rely on move-on powers under the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act to give directions to a person who is in a public area of a state building if the person is disorderly or disruptive, there is no current express power to direct a trespasser to leave. Instead of relying on the use of force to resolve an incident, amendments in the bill will allow protective services officers and police officers to give a direction to leave to trespassers or to a person who is acting inappropriately in a state building. This is a less intrusive or confrontational method to resolve an incident than using physical force to remove that person. One would think that the member for Maiwar would support that. That allows the relevant person the option to leave when directed rather than facing the more serious consequences of being physically removed from a state building. Further, the bill introduces legislative safeguards that ensure the accountability of an officer who exercises this power. The exercise of the power would be considered to be an enforcement act requiring relevant information to be recorded in the register of enforcement acts.

Finally, this amendment is consistent with security powers already used in Queensland and other Australian jurisdictions. For example, the Hospital and Health Boards Act 2011 authorises security officers in Queensland hospitals to give directions to a person to leave health service land if it is reasonably believed that a person has no lawful or good reason for being present. I also note that New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia all make provision for directions to be given to people behaving inappropriately in certain government buildings, particularly in court precincts. Put simply, this amendment is a prudent measure designed to provide appropriate security for the safety of our state buildings.

I take this opportunity to thank the personnel who have worked on the development of this bill. In particular, I mention Assistant Commissioner Debbie Platz, the Executive Officer of the Security and Counter-Terrorism Command. I give a particular shout-out to Superintendent Keiryn Dermody, the Commander of the Protective Services Group. I know she is watching right now. She is very excited about this. I also acknowledge officers from the legislation branch of the Queensland Police Service who are always so diligent in not only preparing legislation but also engaging with stakeholders and ensuring that the bill reflects the intention of this parliament.

This bill is important. It will place Protective Services in the best position to continue its function of securing state buildings. I believe that the House has an obligation to ensure that our government agencies serve Queensland as efficiently and effectively as possible. This bill supports our Protective Services Group in ensuring that those agencies can go about their work safely and that people who use those services and visit the buildings where those services are provided can do so safely. This bill meets all of those obligations.

I take this opportunity to once again thank all members for contributing to the debate. I thank the parliamentary committee and the parliamentary staff. I commend the bill to the House and I encourage all members to support it.