




Speech By
Hon. Mark Ryan

MEMBER FOR MORAYFIELD

Record of Proceedings, 22 June 2022

INSPECTOR OF DETENTION SERVICES BILL

 **Hon. MT RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services) (6.11 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Inspector of Detention Services Bill. The Inspector of Detention Services Bill delivers on the Palaszczuk government's commitment to establish an independent inspectorate with oversight over Queensland's detention services. The principle around this is very simple, but one that will deliver better outcomes in custodial settings. The theory is that if we enhance oversight then we enhance the operating environment which then enhances safety—safety for staff, safety for visitors and safety for those who are in the care of the agencies that are responsible for detaining people from time to time; those agencies being the Queensland Corrective Services, the Department of Youth Justice and the Queensland Police Service.

I have heard a number of members talk about the connection to OPCAT, the optional protocol against cruelty and torture, and the way that is being operationalised through the national preventive mechanism. There is a very interesting history to that. That was actually an action taken by the former coalition government without consultation with the states around how that protocol would work. It essentially authorised, without consultation, an international organisation to come into Australia to inspect state and territory custodial facilities. That aside, the government has made a commitment around the independent inspectorate. We look forward to the principle of enhancing oversight to enhance operations to enhance safety, delivering better outcomes here in Queensland. We look forward to the new federal government working collaboratively with the states in terms of how they are going to operationalise OPCAT through the national preventive mechanism.

We have heard some of those opposite use quite insulting terms for our professional custodial officers, calling them guards. That is quite an insulting term. I have heard members use that term for custodial officers. These are highly trained, professional, dedicated public servants. All of them are public servants because of this government's action to get rid of private prisons here in Queensland. We are very proud of that. For those opposite to call custodial officers guards is insulting. I encourage all other members to refrain from using that term.

To enhance the professionalism and also safety of our custodial officers in Queensland, we have had an ongoing program of investing in them—investing in their training, investing in the facilities and investing in the resources available to them. We have one of the biggest custodial expansion programs happening right now. A new 1,500-bed—I see the member for Caloundra is very excited about this—facility is being built at Gatton. It will bring the total number of extra beds that this government has brought online to over 4,000 extra beds. This is a huge expansion of our custodial capacity.

We have also been investing in staff training and staff resourcing. Queensland custodial officers are now the most highly trained custodial officers in Australasia. They are also the most equipped custodial officers in Australasia. We continue to roll out the new leading tactical options and skills training module to our custodial officers. It is an excellent program which focuses on de-escalation and communication as well as the skills that go along with that. We are also continuing with the training and deployment of OC spray for custodial officers in male high-security correctional centres. That is an

Australian first that was well received by the workforce and has gone on to assist our custodial officers with enhancing security. We also continue to resource them with load-bearing vests and body worn cameras.

An initiative that the member for Caloundra's former colleagues will be very excited to see is that in the budget there is additional funding for safety security hatches to be installed in correctional centres as well as additional funding for body worn cameras. The money we are going to spend on that is quite enormous. There is \$2.5 million for extra body worn cameras for custodial officers as well as \$6.7 million to install security safety hatches. That is a significant investment.

It would be remiss of any member in this House to neglect the professionalism and investment in custodial officers who go about their work not only ensuring that the centres are secure and safe and their colleagues are safe but also that the people in the care of Queensland Corrective Services are kept safe and provided with the opportunity to rehabilitate so that when the time comes for those people in custody to be released they are released as better people than when they entered custody.

This bill will implement the government's response to the Queensland parole system review recommendation No. 88 and Taskforce Flaxton recommendation No. 33 to establish an independent inspectorate over corrective services facilities. It also implements the Queensland Parole System Review recommendation No. 90, that the inspectorate's scope include youth detention centres and police watch houses.

In line with the recommendations made by these reviews, the bill ensures the inspector is an officer of the parliament appointed by the Governor in Council; is not subject to the direction of a minister or member of parliament in the performance of their functions, but is able to review a matter regarding a place of detention at the request of a responsible minister; is able to examine all operations of Queensland Corrective Services' facilities; submits an annual report to the parliament on the inspectorate's operations, to be tabled in the Legislative Assembly by the Speaker; reports to the parliament via to the Speaker on each review of detention service undertaken, including places subject to mandatory inspections and any recommendations made; and works collaboratively with existing oversight entities in Queensland.

The Inspector of Detention Services will support Queensland Corrective Services in their objective to ensure community safety and crime prevention through the humane containment, supervision and rehabilitation of prisoners. That is an important thing to highlight because that is the statutory obligation of Queensland Corrective Services. That is in the act. The act requires the department to do its job around the humane containment, supervision and rehabilitation of prisoners. Queensland Corrective Services manages approximately 9,000 prisons across 11 high-security prisons, seven low-security facilities and 13 work camps. The work corrective services workers undertake day to day is complex and challenging. This has been felt more so recently with the additional challenges of the COVID-19 outbreak and recent flooding events across the state.

I would certainly like to take this opportunity to commend those officers for the outstanding work they do. The motto of Queensland Corrective Services which is worn on the sleeve of every single custodial officer is 'Protecting the community'. These often unsung heroes of the community safety spectrum here in Queensland do that job very well. They keep the community safe by ensuring that those people who are held in custody stay in custody and are held in custody in a safe way. Then they also go about their work of trying to rehabilitate those offenders. I think we owe it to all our custodial officers to take this opportunity to acknowledge their outstanding contribution to protecting the community and also their contribution to the people of Queensland through that work.

The establishment of the Inspector of Detention Services will support transparency and accountability in how these types of facilities operate. This, in turn, contributes to public confidence in the delivery of detention services in Queensland and helps promote the obligations of the department under the Human Rights Act. Once established, the inspector may at any time inspect a place of detention which, within my portfolio area, includes a prison, a community corrections centre—like the Helana Jones Centre—a work camp and a watch house. The inspector will be required to conduct a minimum of five-yearly inspections at each of the 11 high-security prisons in Queensland. While there will be no mandated inspections for the low-security prisons and 13 work camps, the bill allows the inspector to have oversight of those facilities.

This is an important bill around enhancing oversight, enhancing safety and delivering better custodial outcomes. I commend the bill to the House and I encourage all members to support it.