




Speech By
Melissa McMahon

MEMBER FOR MACALISTER

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POLICE SERVICE ADMINISTRATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mrs McMAHON** (Macalister—ALP) (5.51 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Police Service Administration and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. As a member of the Economics and Governance Committee which inquired into the bill, I thank my fellow committee members; the chair, the eminently capable member for Logan; the committee secretariat, who assisted us in this inquiry; and those who made submissions.

Mr Stevens: And the deputy chair.

Mrs McMAHON: Yes, I refer to the deputy chair, who made it relatively painless. The minister has outlined the objectives of the bill. In my contribution I would like to focus on the changes this bill will make on the state government protective security service organisation.

As a background, Protective Services was established in 1984 and tasked with providing security services for Queensland government buildings. Currently the organisation provides static and mobile security services for over 80 state government buildings. The need for such security may not seem obvious if you consider the number of state government buildings at this end of the city, where public servants go about their duties in relative peace and comfort, but those 80 buildings also include 38 court precincts throughout Queensland. Those entering court facilities can often present a risk to those who work in the court precinct if not for the security procedures and personnel in place.

In 2016 Protective Services was integrated into the Queensland Police Service following a review of the Public Safety Business Agency. This has certainly streamlined a number of security and reporting protocols around overall public safety. The issue at the heart of this bill is to provide streamlined powers for protective services officers. In the Queensland Police Service, all sworn officers have the same powers regardless of rank. This ensures that every police officer is capable and equipped to respond to matters of public safety without delay. For protective services officers, this is currently not the case.

Currently there are two ranks within Protective Services: protective security officers and senior protective security officers. A protective security officer may only ask a person entering a state building if they will participate in electronic screening and allow their belongings to be searched. They have no power to require compliance with those requests. However, a senior protective security officer may require a person to provide their name, address and reason for being in the state building; seize any contraband possessed by the person; direct a person to leave a building or remove a person from the building; and detain a person suspected of committing an offence against a relevant law.

In order for a protective security officer to exercise those powers, they must do so in the presence of a senior protective security officer. This often causes delays and frequent calls for service for those senior officers. Queensland is the only state jurisdiction that makes such a distinction between the PSOs and the SPSOs. This bill will see the amalgamation of those two roles into one group, the protective services officers.

The training of all protective services officers will be increased from four to five weeks at the Queensland Police Service Academy and will incorporate the increased application of powers. When asked about the increased cost of training, Superintendent Dermody advised that this would be offset by reductions in the current overtime requirements. There is currently an ongoing need for those senior officers to be present in order to ensure sufficient security within those state government buildings. This means that many are rostered on overtime to cater for leave and other roster impacts. By having a single officer category, the imperative to have those officers on overtime will be greatly reduced, thereby making savings to the overall operating costs of the organisation.

Finally, I would like to touch on the checks and balances that come with an increased application of powers for the new class of protective services officers. Provisions are contained within the bill to allow protective servicea officers to use body worn cameras. The use of these devices increases accountability, integrity and public scrutiny. I note that the CCC maintains oversight of the actions of and complaints regarding protective services officers. The CCC routinely comment on the advantages of the use of body worn cameras in ground-truthing many complaints that they receive. Acknowledging the comments made by the member for Mermaid Beach, body worn cameras—courtesy of the Palaszczuk Labor government—have been rolled out to first response officers throughout the state. Noting that Protective Services falls under the Queensland Police Service, those officers operating will have access to body worn cameras and the funding and training for them that comes through the Queensland Police Service.

Protective services officers will be subject to the same drug and alcohol testing regime as police officers and watch house officers. Given the expansion of powers to the protective services officers and their authorisation to use force in the exercise of those powers—much like police officers—it is only fitting and sensible that they be subject to the same amount of scrutiny when it comes to exercising powers in the name of public safety.

I say a big thankyou to all of those protective services officers or, as we have affectionately known them, the 'white shirts' who have played a significant role in public safety in state government buildings for decades. I know that as members of the Queensland Police Service we work extremely effectively and efficiently with them. In fact, security at the Queensland Police Service was often provided by the white shirts. To have them training at the police academy now is a great combination of all that training put together. The fact is that many protective services officers make their way into the Queensland Police Service and vice versa. As officers age out of the Police Service they often transition to the white shirts. It is great to see that that level of experience and training will not be lost to Queensland and that the people who know how to use those powers will have further opportunities to provide service to Queensland as well. I commend the bill to the House.