




Speech By
Aaron Harper

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

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**POLICE POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AND OTHER LEGISLATION
AMENDMENT BILL 2022; POLICE POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AND
OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2023**

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (6.50 pm): I rise to speak on the Police Powers and Responsibilities and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 and the Police Powers and Responsibilities and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. I will touch on a couple of distinct elements of the bills, mainly the monitoring of child sex offenders, hooning and drug diversion. First and foremost I recognise and thank the committees for their work and recommendations and the Minister for Police for ensuring that we right the wrongs of the past LNP government when it comes to the serious issue of monitoring of child sex offenders.

Once again we are here in this place to right the wrongs of the past. We are here to support community safety by reversing the decisions of the LNP. We are here to target child sex offenders. We are here to target those offenders that the LNP let go free. When in government one of the wrong-headed, soft-in-the-head decisions of the LNP was to dramatically reduce the monitoring of child sex offenders. Inexplicably, overnight, because of a deliberate decision of the LNP, more than 1,700 child sex offenders who had been monitored by police were no longer monitored, and that is a disgrace. Shame on those opposite. No wonder there is silence. There is nowhere for those opposite to hide. The hypocrisy of those opposite is laid bare. They talk tough but go soft when it matters most. Never listen to what the LNP says, look at what they do. The LNP's interests are its own, not the interests of Queenslanders.

The laws we are debating today will reverse the shameful actions of the LNP. The government will double the length of time child sex offenders are to be monitored from five to 10 years, repeat child sex offenders will be monitored for 20 years and police will be given a new ability to get surveillance device warrants to monitor convicted offenders. With these new laws Queensland will have the toughest legislative framework in the nation when it comes to the monitoring of child sex offenders. Let us be clear about this: this rights a very significant wrong from the former Newman LNP government which, when it was in government, reduced the monitoring periods for those offenders. This is important legislation. It allows our dedicated law enforcement agencies to keep convicted child sex offenders under their watchful and ever-present eye for far longer than they previously could. This week we will rewrite the record and further crack down on child sex offenders. It is just another example of the LNP's complete disinterest in community safety and its lack of commitment to resourcing police properly. The Palaszczuk government is fixing that with tough new laws and backing our police 100 per cent.

Turning now to the proposed new hooning offences and alternative strategies to address hooning behaviour, this is an area I am deeply interested in. Members will know I was a huge advocate for Drivelt in Townsville, securing \$10 million for the driver education and motorsport precinct in Townsville.

Mr Bailey: Hear, hear!

Mr HARPER: Thank you, Minister Bailey. For me, getting behind this project was all about reducing road trauma by providing a safe environment to race.

Mr Dametto: There is no road into it though.

Mr HARPER: I will take the interjection. I will not actually, I will not bother, because my aim is to reduce road trauma. I have seen far too much of it in North Queensland. Over the last 20 years Thuringowa saw the dragway and speedway closed to increase the development of Thuringowa. The reason I support Drivelt is because it provides an alternative site for young people and car enthusiasts to race, drift and drag their cars in a safe environment. It was supported proudly by our government. Thank you, Minister Bailey and the Premier of Queensland.

We all know dangerous hooning on public streets can result in absolute tragedy with people losing their lives. It is a dangerous practice that must stop. Hooning encompasses a range of dangerous driving behaviours such as speed trials, races and burnouts, evading police and wilfully driving a vehicle to make unnecessary noise or smoke. The QPS reports hooning events pose significant enforcement challenges. Despite strong measures legislated by Queensland governments, including vehicle impoundment and confiscation, hooning is a persistent problem in many areas, including Townsville. We must send a strong message, and this bill brings in increased penalties.

Everyone in this place knows my background. We must acknowledge that the cost of road trauma in Queensland is significant and the emotional and psychological costs are immeasurable. The Queensland Road Safety Strategy estimates that the economic cost of road trauma in 2020 was \$6 billion and accounted for almost 15 per cent of hospital admissions. Although Queensland has some of the toughest measures in Australia to regulate antisocial driving behaviour, hooning remains a persistent problem requiring innovative methods to address it. That is why I support that part of the bill.

In relation to drug diversion, Queensland police have been diverting people for cannabis possession for over 20 years. The program has been successful. Since 2001 over 158,000 people were diverted from the criminal justice system to a health intervention through the current police drug diversion program. The most recent QPS internal analysis of drug crime recidivism amongst drug diversion recipients shows that 72 per cent of those who completed drug diversion did not reoffend. For the member for Scenic Rim to just get up and talk it down shows the paranoia of the LNP. This proves that what we are doing is right. That is a huge mark for the four-year evaluation period. Drug diversion provides an opportunity to connect the users of illicit drugs with information and treatment. This is not only important for the individual and their health, it is also an opportunity to mitigate the impacts of illicit drug use in the broader community. There are operational benefits to diversion. Diversions save resources and time for police and, importantly, the courts. As a result, police resources can be directed to areas where they have greater impact on the safety of communities.

The amendments in this bill do not decriminalise drug possession in Queensland. I will say it again for the LNP who want to go down that path: the amendments in this bill do not decriminalise drug possession in the state of Queensland. Drug possession will still be an offence and police will still have the same powers they always had. The only thing that changes is the way a person in possession of drugs is dealt with. The bill is aimed at dealing with people who possess small quantities of drugs for their personal use. These are all sensible elements of the bill that I support 100 per cent and I think the broader community of Thuringowa, my constituents, would also get behind. I know they would because they have got behind things like Drivelt when I talked about hooning and reducing the rates of road trauma in North Queensland. The drug diversion amendments are common sense and practical. They make real change. I commend the bills to the House.