




Speech By  
**Daniel Purdie**

**MEMBER FOR NINDERRY**

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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 PURDIE** (Ninderry—LNP) (4.45 pm): I rise to contribute to the cognate debate 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 would like to thank my fellow members of the Economics and Governance Committee and the secretariat for their valuable contribution in relation to the deliberations of the 2022 bill, which is the bill I intend to address first. While I will be referencing both of the PPRA amendment bills, I intend to use most of my time today to talk specifically about the serious implications of the amendments that pertain to the police drug diversion program and the child protection offender reporting amendments. At the outset, I highlight my disappointment at the watering down of drug laws in this state. Essentially, this government raising the white flag on the war against drugs should warrant the full attention of this House in a separate standalone bill—not stuck in a larger bill and then considered cognately with yet another bill.

I begin by referencing the Child Protection (Offender Reporting and Offender Prohibition Order) Act 2004. The bill increases the length of reporting periods a reportable offender may be obligated to report under the CP(OROPO) Act from five years, 10 years and life to 10 years, 20 years and life under clause 14 of the bill. There are currently 3,971 registered child sex offenders at large, living in communities across Queensland, and only 44 dedicated police officers assigned to monitor them. Police districts like Logan, Moreton and South Brisbane have between 300 and 400 offenders each. My colleagues and I on this side support any measures to help better monitor paedophiles and protect children, but I am concerned that the timing of this bill is just another thought bubble devised by the minister and his media team more concerned about how things look than how they actually are. At a time when the thin blue line has never been thinner, with police numbers and resources stretched like never before, with actual police numbers well below historic police officer to population ratios and while police are leaving in droves, burnt out by a crisis in youth crime, domestic violence and others, these amendments will place approximately 1,700 extra reportable offenders on the register by 2028, taking the total to 5,722 approximately.

We already know that, due to a lack of resourcing, police are struggling to monitor the most dangerous and serious sex offenders in this state. This was evidenced the day the minister tabled these amendments, in the last sitting week of last year. Accompanied with his usual tough-on-crime pantomime, which we saw again in the chamber earlier, he was hoping to roll into the Christmas break with the illusion of being tough on crime. It was revealed by the *Courier-Mail* the next day that a recidivist child sex offender—supposedly under the strictest monitoring regime in the state—had reoffended by sneaking a young girl into the dangerous and serious offender residential precinct at Wacol. It is no wonder that I and many others have concerns about the government's conviction in providing police with the staff and the extra resources they need to monitor the extra number of registered child sex offenders when the current regime is at breaking point. This was flushed out during the committee's

inquiry into the bill. During the public briefing, the police admitted that they would need extra resources to properly monitor the extra offenders. When asked about the catalyst for this legislative change they admitted that it did not come from the police, particularly from frontline police in this field; it was a decision of government.

When asked if they could point to any underpinning evidence or any recent instances of offenders coming off the register and reoffending, they could not and took the question on notice. It was actually the Queensland Law Society which stated that its submission included—

... consideration of matters such as the effectiveness of reporting obligations and the adequacy of police resources, powers and practices in administering the Act.

As such the amendments proposed under this Bill are inextricably linked to matters being examined in the CCC's legislative review. The evidentiary basis for these proposed amendments to the offender reporting scheme, and the police powers available to monitor compliance, is unclear.

It went on to say—

The amendments reverse changes made in 2014—

by the LNP government—

which shortened reporting periods for reportable offenders.

The QLS went on to say—

We understand this was based on evidence at that time 'that sex offenders present the highest risk of re-offending within the first three to five years of their release into the community'. However, the justification for the extension of reporting periods is now said to be due to 'the inherent difficulties associated with the rehabilitation of child sex offenders and risk factors resulting from recidivism'.

We raise the following concerns with the bill as currently drafted: amendments to the offender monitoring periods should be reserved pending the outcome of any related recommendations which may arise from the CCC's review. As I said earlier, my colleagues and I support any strengthening of the law when it comes to protecting our kids from paedophiles, but this needs to be coupled with appropriate police resources because we know that our police are already struggling to keep their heads above water.

Moving now to the amendments in the PPRA bill 2023, this is the legislation that I will be focusing on in the second part of my contribution, particularly in relation to the drug diversion program and the expansion of drug diversions for minor drug offences as well as the inclusion of all dangerous drugs and certain pharmaceuticals. Previously a minor drug diversion was for a small amount of cannabis sativa and implements. The bill makes amendments to the Queensland Police Service and the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services. However, it is primarily the expansion of the police drug diversion program that I mentioned earlier which I have very serious concerns about.

The main feature of the amendments relates to expanding the range of options available to police to divert minor drug offenders from the criminal justice system. It says this will be achieved by introducing a drug diversion warning for minor drug offences, allowing an eligible person the opportunity to participate in subsequent drug diversion and expanding the eligibility for a drug diversion assessment program. Essentially, drug users will be given three chances when found to be in possession of dangerous drugs before facing a criminal charge, including schedule 1 dangerous drugs under the Drugs Misuse Act like heroin and methamphetamine. The most alarming aspect of these amendments, however, can be found in the expansion, as I just outlined briefly, of the definition of a minor drugs offence in section 378B which will broaden the application of the police drug diversion program to include small quantities of any type of dangerous drugs and schedule 4 and schedule 8 medicines under the Medicines and Poisons Act 2019 along with items and utensils used in association with these drugs. I ask how in good faith this government can be dragged kicking and screaming to finally act on the dangerous trend of vaping on the one hand and on the other hand allow dangerous schedule 1 drugs and illicit drugs like heroin and meth to freely circulate in our community? That paradox is not lost on Queenslanders.

In my maiden speech I said—

One of the most devastating links between organised crime and ordinary Queenslanders is the drug ice. Criminals, particularly criminal motorcycle gangs, generate their profits from this and other evil substances, and their customers are often Queenslanders who may have grown up in or been raising loving, law-abiding families.

I went on to say—

In my duties as a detective I have taken kids out of the harm, filth and neglect of a house where the parents are addicted to ice. Through no fault of their own, that child has been given an almost insurmountable handicap in life.

I also went on to say—

I have also comforted parents who have lost a child to ice—parents who nurtured their children like any other family and who had them ripped away by this evil drug. As families are torn apart by ice, the community begins to tear apart, and regional communities are bearing the brunt of this epidemic. We have to do more. We have to do better.

Watering down drug laws and raising the white flag on the war against drugs is not doing better.

I know I have spoken about my previous policing experience many times in this House, but when it comes to the war on drugs I think there is some information that I can give, and I appreciate that every member has experiences that they can bring to this House. I first saw street-level drug addiction when I was a general duties police officer in the Valley back in the nineties dealing with overdose deaths in the streets and in boarding houses and the subsequent increases in crime that addiction played on the community and then from a higher level working at the Covert & Surveillance Unit, the State Drug Squad and the Australian Crime Commission. I have arrested drug importers and traffickers to street-level dealers. What I did not say in my maiden speech because my kids were probably in the gallery is that I have also retrieved dead babies from the houses of parents who are addicted to heroin and ice. In all aspects of life, like we are seeing now with youth crime, removing deterrents only increases incentives. Giving someone three free chances to take schedule 1 dangerous drugs like heroin and meth is too much rope. In my experience, by the time police have caught an offender with heroin or meth for the third time, their life is almost certainly already over.

I heard the minister talk about this being supported by other legislation. The legislation that I have seen more recently differs from that, and the prime example is San Francisco where my brother lives. In early 2000 it started implementing a harm minimisation strategy which essentially removed barriers for people taking drugs. In 2000 there were 17,415 overdose deaths in America. In 2020 there were 93,330, an increase of 535 per cent. There is believed to be about 25,000 injecting drug users in San Francisco and the other stats are even more alarming. Hopefully I will get a chance to talk more about this in consideration in detail tomorrow.