




Speech By
Hon. Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR MCCONNEL

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

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing) (12.03 pm): I rise to speak in support the bill before the House. I will start with the drug diversion program. There is a saying that if you keep doing the same thing and expect a different outcome, it is not going to happen. This bill is about looking at this issue. The policy of diverting people for cannabis possession has been in place for over 20 years. It is a program that has been very successful. Since 2001 over 158,000 people have been diverted from the criminal justice system to a health intervention through current police drug diversion programs. That, to me, is a good news story.

The most recent QPS internal analysis of drug crime recidivism among drug diversion recipients showed that 72 per cent of those who completed drug diversion programs did not reoffend. My view is that this bill takes that empirical evidence one step further. The bill expands the availability of drug diversion to drugs beyond cannabis. It removes barriers to eligibility. I have never heard more whingeing and whining from those opposite, who are without one idea. If I lived in the electorate of Currumbin I would be very upset, because there is nothing worse than your local member talking your electorate down. Every time the member gets up she says that they are plagued with hooning, plagued with theft and plagued with break-ins. Honestly, I love the area of Currumbin.

An opposition member: It is the truth.

Ms GRACE: I will take that interjection; 'It is true,' they are saying. So you do not want anyone to go to Currumbin because it is so unsafe? It is so ridiculous and so puerile for members opposite to be so out of touch that they would come in here and continually downgrade their own electorates in that way.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Lister): Members to my left, particularly the members for Mudgeeraba and Mermaid Beach, will cease their interjections; the minister is not taking them.

Ms GRACE: It is no wonder they are interjecting. They know that what I am saying is absolutely correct. They know that the last thing you do is talk down your electorate on the beautiful Gold Coast at every opportunity.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance under standing order 118(b). I ask respectfully that the minister comes back to the bill at hand.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will take some advice. There has been a degree of latitude afforded to members by a line of occupants of this chair. The minister is responding to earlier commentary and, while I remain the chair, we will proceed on that basis.

Ms GRACE: I will move on, because I could go on forever about how out of touch those opposite are. They have no new ideas and no new ways for the community. The people who are supporting this bill should be ashamed of themselves. They come into this place and behave like Chicken Little, running around saying that the sky will fall in and saying complete untruths. It is a complete distortion of what the bill is actually doing. They should be ashamed of themselves. They will be on the opposition benches for a long time. The debate on this bill displays how out of touch those opposite really are, particularly those who represent the Gold Coast electorates. We know what people on the Gold Coast think about this bill. It is completely at odds with what has been said in this House.

The bill introduces three tiers of diversion, building on the current model whereby the person can be offered only one diversion. There are operational benefits to diversion. Diversion saves resources and time for police. The QPS are on side in relation to this measure, but members opposite are opposing it with frivolous and ridiculous assumptions that are not even reality in the bill. Police resources will be able to be directed to areas where they can have a greater impact on the safety of communities.

Let me emphasise for those opposite: the amendments in this bill do not decriminalise drug possession in Queensland. Drug possession will still be an offence, and police still have the same powers they have always had. There are no changes to that. Regardless of what those opposite say, that is a fact. The only thing that changes—let's be clear—is the way the 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. They are put into health programs—there is a greater number of diversion programs—that have a 72 per cent success rate. These have been operating for 20 years.

What those opposite do not get I still do not understand. The whingeing and whining that goes on with no ideas is unbelievable when we look at the number of people who are supportive of this bill. The bill recognises that it is more appropriate to deal with these issues in a diversion program. My electorate of McConnel, of which I am very proud—a fantastic part of Brisbane and I only wish those opposite from the Gold Coast would be just as proud of fantastic parts of the Gold Coast—is very supportive of this measure. Many people see the benefits and I am here representing them and am very proud to say that I am supporting this bill.

I also support changes with regard to hooning allowing police to use impoundment and immobilisation. I like the idea of a new offence which has provisions to deter spectators. Often these people do not do it if they do not have an audience. It is one of those things unfortunately. In addition to targeting persons actively participating in hooning related activities, it is a great step in the right direction to have new offences that prohibit a person from willingly participating in group activities; organising, promoting or encouraging another person to participate in it; and filming, photographing and publishing of film or photographs of a hooning offence. I do not understand hooning. I have never done it in my life, but for some reason it does happen. Anything that we can do to look at this issue—

Mrs Frecklington interjected.

Ms GRACE: I take the interjection from the member for Nanango: no, member, I honestly have not participated in hooning. It is one thing that I have not done.

Mr Brown: They saw you at Albion Park!

Ms GRACE: Yes, and I take the interjection from the member for Capalaba. I did participate in harness racing one time and, let me tell you, that was the closest thing to hooning that I had been involved in in my life. It was actually quite frightening, but I was glad that I won.

There is a pool of potential applicants with past policing experience whom we should welcome back as special constables. We have this wonderful system in Queensland where there is a compulsory retirement age of 60. Police officers receive an additional benefited superannuation for their wonderful careers in policing, but they do have to retire at the age of 60. I will not give away my age, but I am a little bit older than 60 and I am still going and I think there is a place for special constables now and I really support the amendments that are in place. These substitute police officers will be a pool of relief officers similar to what currently exists in other jurisdictions in police services, in nursing and in the teacher workforce. There are some wonderful retired teachers who come back as a relief pool. Special constables will only be able to undertake frontline first response general duties and will be employed when and as needed by the QPS.

These amendments are wonderful. It is a great way of welcoming back these special constables so that we can facilitate the employment of former police officers on specific terms, enabling those officers to act as a relief police force. The amendments are great in that they go in the right direction. I thank the Minister for Police and Corrective Services, who worked very closely with the Department of Industrial Relations. We have a fantastic industrial relations process of dealing with these officers. We

have handled the superannuation issues. We have handled the manner in which they will be employed and their payment. It has been a credit to work with them to ensure that we have all of the industrial matters in place.

They can only be employed in certain ways. They will be covered by minimum standards and superannuation. They will have an hourly rate. They will receive the applicable casual loading. I am sure that the constables who come on board in this area will be very grateful for the work and we are grateful to them for doing it. My electorate has one of the biggest safe night precincts and I can see these special constables doing work in that area in terms of relieving others who may have worked long hours. I can see them on the beat in the Valley working with Chaplain Watch and with those who do an excellent job in the safe night precinct in my electorate. I look forward to meeting some when I am out and about in my wonderful electorate of McConnel. I will never talk McConnel down. I will never plague it with all of the issues that are raised by others. I commend the bill to the House.