




Speech By
James Lister

MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS

Record of Proceedings, 23 May 2023

**CORRECTIVE SERVICES (EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES AND SECURITY) AND
OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (12.51 pm): I rise to make a contribution on this bill. I was intrigued by the contributions of the minister in his second reading speech and the member for Redlands, the chair of the committee, in referring to the statement of reservations. In fact the minister went even further and spoke about my speech in the second reading debate on a bill that he was referring to back in 2020. If you will pardon my freedom, Mr Deputy Speaker Hart, I believe that gives me the opportunity to respond to those things since they have been brought up already.

We need to look at outcomes. The minister wrote a curious letter to me and the member for Theodore harrumphing about us raising the fact that the bill was a lost opportunity to do something about assaults on corrective services staff. He referred, as he did in here, to the doubling of the maximum penalty to 14 years imprisonment for those found guilty of that particular crime, but that is where it ends. It is all talk, because as was said very eloquently by the shadow minister, the member for Burdekin, there has been approximately no convictions where a sentence imposed was for 14 years.

This is what we see from the Palaszczuk government. We see them turning to maximum penalties as a way to hoodwink the community into thinking they are being tough on crime when in actual fact they are making no difference whatsoever. I have a copy of the letter here, which I found most amusing, and I table it for the benefit of the House.

Tabled paper: Letter, undated, from the Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services, Hon. Mark Ryan, to the member for Southern Downs, Mr James Lister MP, and the member for Theodore, Mr Mark Boothman MP, regarding the statement of reservations contained in the Education, Employment and Training Committee Report No. 31 [679](#).

I have noted upon it the answers to the questions by the minister, which were that there were 11 serious assaults on officers in the financial year 2020-21 and that in the following financial year, which was the most recent one for which we have results, there were again 11 serious assaults. In all of those 22 cases, there was not one imposition of that maximum penalty. When the minister responds to the second reading debate, I would like him to tell me how that intention to be tough on the offenders who assault prison staff sits with the fact that none of them received that extra penalty. I think if you are serious about it, you have to impose a minimum penalty. Where was he? Was he doing that?

He also said that this was not mentioned in the House at the time, and I think he was referring to me. At the time, I had my doubts about how effective that would be, but I did not realise the outcome would be as damning as this where there are multiple assaults on corrective services staff. He also said that I had said it was a good bill. What the minister failed to tell the House is that I gave a scathing account of that particular bill in this place. I criticised the government's persistent hand-wringing over the rights of offenders—because the bill originally intended to let prisoners out early—and how that sat with a community which was dealing with difficulties with crime, including my community of Goondiwindi and lots of other places around the state. I was scathing about how they set that against clamping down

on gel blasters of all things, as well as their miserable treatment of the Queensland Living History Federation in their sincere and well-documented approaches to the committee and the government seeking a special licence category for the innocuous firearms they used in re-enactments and so forth.

I am pleased I have had an opportunity to add to the record. I say to the minister that it was a bizarre thing to do to write to me and the member for Theodore, as the co-signatories of that statement of reservations, to point out that he had strengthened the law, when the minister under his own hand—I assume he had to sign this—had provided a written answer to a question put by the member for Theodore himself asking about the statistics, and it was in that particular document that we found out there had been 11 serious assaults in each of those two consecutive years.

There is nothing to be proud of there. The Together union originally mounted an industrial case outside 1 William Street, as I recall it, and I believe the member for Springwood may have been personally present there. It is extraordinary that that minister in a Westminster system remains in the confidence of the Premier after breaching cabinet solidarity in that way. It is disgraceful that the minister would focus on a petty point like that and give no air and consideration to the victims—the hardworking corrective services officers—who work in an extremely difficult environment and are not being given the attention that society expects.

I would like to say one other thing regarding the drones. I hope the minister can shed some light on the question that the shadow minister, the member for Burdekin, put to him regarding drones. The question of drones and who can use them nearby needs to be addressed. Is a farmer who has a legitimate use for a drone in checking his cattle, looking at water points and so forth that might be near a designated corrections facility going to be banned from being able to use a drone? As the member for Theodore was remarking to me before, they can put telephoto lenses and mechanisms to eject things forward of their position for quite some distance, so there does not seem to have been enough thought put into that.

I stand by 100 per cent the comments that the member for Theodore and I made in relation to this being a missed opportunity to ensure there are tougher, effective penalties for inmates who assault corrective services officers. Rather than squabbling and trying to make a pathetic political point in here, I suggest the minister would be better off doing something about it and making sure those who are convicted of that particular offence are given a punishment which is in line with the expectations of society.