




Speech By
Jim McDonald

MEMBER FOR LOCKYER

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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 McDonald** (Lockyer—LNP) (6.02 pm): I am pleased to be able to contribute to this cognate debate on the police powers and responsibilities bills from both 2022 and 2023. When we look at the details of these bills and some of the content, it is very clear that some of the changes that are recommended are very good. As our shadow minister outlined, we support many of those changes. I am particularly pleased about the evade offence and the onus of presumption that will be on the owner of those vehicles involved in those crimes. That is something that police have been asking for for a long time.

However, many other aspects of these two bills are very concerning. For those who are not aware and for those watching for the first time, I spent a long time as a police officer, with the last 14 years being as the officer in charge of police at Laidley up until 2017. I can tell that many laws that come through have got unintended consequences, and I am very concerned that these changes to the drugs issues and diversion programs are going to be one of those situations. These bills will go through tomorrow and it will be one of those days that we look back on and say, 'You see, we were right.'

Any evidence-based diversionary program is very good, but this government has gone way too far. The existing arrangements for drug diversions are for basically a small amount of cannabis and some utensils, and people who qualify can get that diversion. I have been saying for many years that health and education are the way to combat the drug problem, but we have offenders out there who are not good people and when this goes through they are now going to be walking in our community carrying a gram of ice, up to a gram of other amphetamine including speed, some heroin, some cocaine, a few pills and some green leaf material or cannabis and they will qualify for a drug diversion not just once but on three occasions. I can tell the government that this is just way too far.

If they were evidence-based diversionary programs that were designed to give opportunities to good people in our community for a small amount of those dangerous drugs, I could probably come to terms with that. However, the unintended consequences of this are going to be that parents who are pro drug use will be saying to their children, 'Just make sure you don't get more than a gram of those different substances.' Bokies are going to be saying to their customers, including children, 'Just make sure you get one of those because it's under a gram. You'll just get a smack on the wrist and get a diversion.' These are the unintended consequences that are going to cause a slow erosion of our society which will create more problems.

Queensland Police Service statistics say that there are 17,000 minor drugs offences in a year, and they include some of those dangerous drugs including heroin, ice, cocaine, other amphetamine types, MDMA and other tablets. Under this new system, all of those people are probably going to go across and qualify for a diversionary program, but there will be many, many more people than that because at the moment people in society say, 'I won't carry those drugs because it's a crime and I could

get in trouble and maybe lose my job or never get a government job.' With this change, people will be carrying those amounts and the police work on attending to those minor drug offences will increase. It does not take five minutes to put together the paperwork to see a drug diversion warning or a drug diversion put in place, and people are now going to be able to do those things on up to three occasions.

I am also very concerned with the resourcing that under this government will not be provided to those drug diversion services, wherever they may be. The backlog there will blow out very quickly. The practical implication of that is that minor drug offenders who are carrying a gram of speed, a gram of heroin, a gram of amphetamine or a gram of cocaine are going to go to a drug diversion, but before they even get to that drug diversion they are going to qualify again. I wonder if the minister could tell us if it will be okay for somebody to get the drug diversion three times if they have not even been to the first. What are these unintended consequences?

I am genuinely concerned about the erosion of our society and the social impacts of these changes. I know there was an inquiry undertaken and there were some views that it was open season on drugs, but I can say as an experienced police officer who was supervising police and dealing with drug offenders, youth criminals and other criminals in our community that these drug offenders, youth criminals and other criminals are not mutually exclusive. Many of the recidivist youth offenders who we have talked about here on many occasions use drugs.

When you start to take away some of these things and say, 'It's okay to use drugs,' that is going to be an easy choice for them to make, but what about all of those good kids in our community who at the present time are being told by parents, teachers and anyone with influence on them, 'No, you can't do drugs'? This might not be decriminalising all of those drugs and, yes, there is a drug diversion—and, as I said before and I place on the record again, I support education and health responses to the drug problem—but this has gone way too far. It is wrong policy, and it is going to be a very great detriment to Queensland.

I want to also stress to the House here tonight and to the community out there that the use of drugs in our society is going to increase because of this.

Mr Smith: Rubbish. Absolute rubbish.

Mr McDONALD: I will take the interjection from the member for Bundamba. Let's see how many people in the future years to come—

Mr McCALLUM: Mr Acting Speaker, I rise to a point of order.

Mr McDONALD: I took the interjection because—

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Resume your seat, please, member for Lockyer. What is your point of order?

Mr McCALLUM: I did not make any interjection at all.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: That is not a point of order.

Mr McDONALD: Acting Speaker, if it helps you and Hansard, I am sorry if I said 'Bundamba'; it was the member for Bundaberg. I can tell you, as an experienced police officer, that the rate of drug use will increase and it will be a terrible blight on our community here in Queensland.

The Premier of Victoria, Daniel Andrews, who is of the same colour as this government here in Queensland, is on record to say, 'No way, we are not going to do that sort of thing because it is not good.' Other countries around the world have experimented with the soft-on-crime initiatives and most of those have reversed that terrible situation. I can tell you it is going to happen here. It is absolutely going to be more work for police and it is going to be a lot more work for those people who will be conducting the diversionary programs.

I mentioned before that I am very pleased to see the evade offences and the owner having a presumption of driving that vehicle—that is a very sound policy decision. It is with these mixed parts of the bill—

Mr Power interjected.

Mr McDONALD: In this one, too, mate. This cognate bill has some good things, but it is this social experiment with regard to the drug offences which is going to affect—the member for Bundaberg said before it will not result in increased drug use. If people use amphetamines once—once—they can end up with a permanent drug toxicity. There are a lot of colloquial terms for that, but they will end up with a permanent drug problem and they are a huge blight on our society. Many of those people are part of the youth crime cohort who are doing terrible things right across this state in terms of crime and criminal offending, and this is a step down the ladder. It is going to make those youth offenders and others even worse.