




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BUNDAMBA

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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 McCALLUM** (Bundamba—ALP) (5.52 pm): I rise in support of these bills. I will deal with the issue of drug diversion to begin with. It is an issue that Queensland police have been dealing with for a very long time. Queensland police have been diverting people for cannabis possession for over two decades, and that program has been extremely 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 Queensland Police Service's most recent analysis of recidivism among drug diversion recipients indicates that 72 per cent of those who completed drug diversion did not reoffend for a drug related offence within the study period, which I believe was around four years. The evidence of drug diversion that has been in place in Queensland, administered by Queensland police for well over 20 years, is very, very clear: it is overwhelmingly successful. I am very happy to see the laws before the parliament today. Queensland police will have new powers when it comes to dealing with people who are found with small quantities of drugs.

The drug diversion program will be expanded to include the minor possession of other types of drugs by implementing a new tiered approach. For the first minor drug possession offence a police officer will issue a warning accompanied by a notice and a referral to a support service. For second and third minor drug possession offences an officer will offer the opportunity for the person to participate in a mandatory—so the person must participate—drug diversion assessment program. For the fourth minor drug possession offence the officer issues the offender with a notice to appear in court.

It is important to note that this successful drug diversionary program, which is being expanded based on the evidence, is accompanied by a tough approach to drug traffickers. Under the bills before the parliament, the penalty for drug trafficking will increase from 25 years imprisonment to life imprisonment. This is a great suite of laws that are really going to make a positive difference by being tougher on drug traffickers and providing greater drug diversionary pathways for minor offences. It is a commonsense approach. Police spend thousands of hours that could be better focused on targeting drug traffickers.

It is very important to put on the record that the Queensland Police Service supports this approach. Every one of Queensland's Queensland-based commissioners since the Fitzgerald era has supported this approach. The Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce recommended that government should consider adopting a health system response to certain drug related offences like these. Health experts support this approach. The AMAQ is on record as supporting this. It would seem that the only people who do not support this are the Queensland LNP, who as part of this debate have stated their opposition to it.

I will read some quotes from some of the people who do support the measures that are contained in this bill. The current Police Commissioner, Katarina Carroll, is on the record as saying—

I wanted this reform because research shows that if you divert people early to health and education services they are less likely to reoffend.

She goes on to say, 'It just makes sense.' Former police commissioner Bob Atkinson is on the record as saying—

Our response to illegal drug use should have as many options as possible. This doesn't mean that they get off, but that they have chances to make better choices.

Former police commissioner Ian Stewart is on the record as saying—

Expanding drug diversion is not about going soft on crime. Just the opposite. It is a way of offering real hope to those caught up in drug use and providing a proven pathway to better personal wellbeing away from the criminal justice spiral. Increasing penalties for drug trafficking in the state while broadening the ability of police when dealing with minor personal drug use shows a commitment to going hard on the real criminals involved in the drug trade.

Former Australian Federal Police commissioner Mick Palmer is on the record as saying—

I welcome the government's decision to implement a diversionary approach to the use and possession of drugs.

Finally, the current President of the AMAQ, Maria Boulton, is on the record as saying—

We've been calling for this change since 2001. Our focus has to be on helping people to stop their drug use, not seeing them end up in the criminal justice system.

By drawing on the best evidence-based practices we can start treating drug use predominantly as a health problem instead of a criminal issue. Courts do not need to get needlessly clogged up with minor cases that are fundamentally a health issue. Indeed, sometimes unfortunately the individuals who are charged with these minor offences that are clogging up the courts do not get the help they need. It is a lose-lose situation for all parties concerned.

If we can get drug users into successful diversion programs and keep them out of the criminal justice system, that benefits the entire community. These reforms are about helping people, who are often young, to deal with a health issue.

I will now turn briefly to the issue of hooning. The Palaszczuk Labor government has taken strong action to combat hooning. The Queensland Police Service is the largest user of Axon Citizen, a technology that allows the community to easily upload digital evidence, such as video footage and photographs, to help catch hooners. That has been in use for a while now, along with provisions where any motorist who is found guilty of hooning can have their car destroyed. I am sure many members can recall when a hoon car was recently dismantled out the front of parliament.

The reforms that we have brought in to combat hooners to date have been very effective, and they will be further bolstered by the provisions that are contained in this bill. One of the measures used by hooners is the removal or alteration of vehicle registration plates. This continues to be a technique hooners use to avoid being detected or identified. This bill adds an additional penalty if a registration plate is altered in relation to hooning. The maximum penalty is doubled. It also strengthens offences that exist in relation to doing burnouts.

There are new offences to deter hooning spectators or those assisting or promoting hooning. The police are very clear in saying that these hooning networks can be very well organised and very sophisticated in their communication methods and how they hold events. These new offence provisions will prohibit a person from: willingly participating in a group activity relating to a hooning offence; organising, promoting or encouraging another person to participate in or view a group activity involving hooning; and filming, photographing or publishing a film or photograph of a hooning offence. These are great measures and I commend the bills to the House.