




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR CALOUNDRA

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**POLICE POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AND OTHER LEGISLATION
AMENDMENT BILL; CORRECTIVE SERVICES (PROMOTING SAFETY) AND
OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr HUNT** (Caloundra—ALP) (12.27 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the cognate bills for police powers and corrective services. I thank my fellow committee members and of course the secretariat for their hard work on these reports. The bill seeks to strengthen support for victims of crime in a number of ways: improving the operation of the victims register; protecting the use of victim and intelligence information in parole decisions; requiring representation for victims on the Parole Board Queensland; strengthening powers to respond to the abuse of prisoner communication channels; and increasing oversight of child sex offenders.

This government places victim safety as a very high priority, as is evidenced by such things as the creation of a Victims' Commissioner. Unwilling to stop there, our government is going further in this bill. This bill proposes to streamline the registration process for the victims register. While retaining existing registration processes, it adds additional pathways with the aim to 'reduce the re-traumatisation that can occur when information is required to be re-disclosed by a victim'.

A component of the bill that I fully support is that it proposes to increase flexibility in relation to engagement with the victims register and parole process by allowing the board to accept non-written submissions from an eligible person about a parole decision. From my previous experience as a custodial officer, this is a very significant proposition that will put many victims in a better supported environment when responding to the Parole Board. It is no secret that much criminal activity goes hand in hand with abject poverty and that a great deal of crime is committed against our poorest and most vulnerable citizens.

I remember when I first started as a custodial officer I was doing a shift in the residential accommodation at Woodford Correctional Centre. I called a prisoner over to the officers' station and asked him to clarify what he had written on a request form. He told me he did not know what was on the form because his mate had filled it out for him. I said, 'Alright. Well, that's fair enough, but you are here now, so exactly what are you chasing on this form?' He looked me right in the eye and said, 'Chief, I can't read or write. Only my sister can in our family.' I sent the prisoner away to process what he had just told me and to figure out who had filled out the form on his behalf. In my life I have met people who have had trouble with reading or writing, but I had never met an adult in their mid-20s who could not read or write at all. I tried over several days to talk to the prisoner about what our education officers could do for him and how he could start the process towards at least functional literacy but he simply was not interested, and I have always considered that a personal failing on my part. It is for this reason that I would also highlight recommendation 2 of the report, that the Queensland government consider allowing non-written parole applications for prisoners.

The bill will also amend the Corrective Services Act to strengthen powers to respond to the abuse of prisoner communication channels. This bill provides that contacts be revoked for a prisoner's personal calls if the chief executive reasonably believes an individual proposed to be approved is a

victim or an alleged victim of an offence committed or alleged to have been committed by the prisoner; and the contact details proposed are not correct or are not suitable for a personal call to be made by a prisoner. Sadly, there are web-based companies that provide essentially fake landline numbers or numbers that look like landlines that are actually connected to mobile phones. These companies are actively inhibiting law enforcement with this practice, and this legislation will go some way towards helping mitigate these shady practices.

The bill proposes to expand some police powers in response to DP(SO)A offenders who are also reportable offenders. Let us compare this to the LNP track record weakening the reporting structures around child sex offenders and allowing 1,700 of them to slip silently into the night untracked and unaccountable. This is yet another example of this government's commitment to real community safety outcomes for Queensland as opposed to the LNP which is not terribly worried about paedophiles roaming our streets unmonitored. For genuine community safety outcomes, I back this government every day of the week and I commend the bills to the House.