




Speech By
Hon. Brent Mickelberg

MEMBER FOR BUDERIM

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POLICE POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES (MAKING JACK'S LAW PERMANENT) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL; CORRECTIVE SERVICES (PAROLE BOARD) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. BA MICKELBERG** (Buderim—LNP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (7.45 pm): I rise today to address the cognate debate and to state my strong support for the new laws that the Crisafulli LNP government has introduced to make Jack's Law permanent and to further restore community safety across Queensland. Let's be clear, what we inherited from the previous Palaszczuk-Miles Labor government was a framework that was soft on crime, overly bureaucratic and, frankly, was out of touch with the realities on our streets. Labor's approach to knife crime, while well-intentioned, was riddled with red tape. They introduced an evidence-based test that required police to determine whether a serious violent crime had occurred at a location in the past six months before they could even authorise a wandering operation. That is not proactive policing; that is reactive bureaucracy.

It did not stop there. Even after that hurdle, officers had to conduct a subjective test asking themselves whether wandering would be likely to detect or deter crime based on whether it had worked in the past. It was a system to tie the hands of our frontline officers, not empower them. For venues outside of safe night precincts, like shopping centres or licensed premises, officers had to go even further, proving that an offence might happen again in the next six months. That is not law enforcement; that is fortune-telling.

We are listening to Queenslanders and we are listening to our police. We have heard that the old framework was difficult, complex and almost unworkable. It placed the onus on police to justify doing their core job of keeping us safe. Based on that and the actions of the Labor government when they were in power, it is my view that Labor do not believe in backing our frontline officers. We do. We know that these offences are not just numbers, they are lives potentially saved. These are tragedies potentially avoided, and that is what happens when we give the police the tools that they need and the trust that they deserve.

Under our government, Jack's Law will be expanded to include shopping centres, sporting precincts, licensed venues and high-risk retail outlets. These are areas where, in my previous shadow ministerial capacity, I raised the need for expansion of wandering powers in the last parliament, something that those opposite chose to ignore when they first brought this legislation to the House.

This is what it means to take crime seriously, and this is what it means to stand with our police and our communities. We are restoring safety because Queenslanders deserve to feel safe whether they are catching a train, going to a concert or just walking through their local shopping centre. I want to commend that particular piece of legislation to the House.

In relation to the Corrective Services (Parole Board) Amendment Bill, the Crisafulli government is committed to putting community safety first, and we want to ensure that communities' and victims' rights are put above those of perpetrators. We are all about giving Queenslanders greater protections when it comes to our parole system.

Currently, if a parolee has failed to comply with their parole order, the decision to suspend their parole can be made by either the board or a single prescribed board member. If a decision is in fact made to suspend such an order, the full board must convene to review that decision. On the flip side, if a decision is made not to suspend the parole order, there is no review mechanism in place to support our community and ensure the decision made was a correct one based on the circumstances.

This bill is targeted and it is necessary not only to rectify this long existing gap but also to provide clarity and certainty to our Parole Board when they review a decision to allow a parolee to remain in the community and disagree with the original outcome.

In fact, the Parole Board president himself clearly stated that this bill will correct a substantial gap which has existed in the parole suspension framework for some time. For Labor to suggest there is no legislative gap is simply wrong. In the current framework, there is an express power to safeguard the rights of a prisoner being returned to custody but there is no express power to safeguard the rights of the community for a parolee who remains in the community but acts in a way that threatens community safety. That tells Queenslanders all that they need to know about where Labor's priorities are when it comes to community safety. Under the former Labor government, two former corrective services ministers also left the board without leadership for seven months, causing a backlog of cases and leaving both parolees and communities in the lurch.

In fact, last year in estimates we found out that the member for Pine Rivers—one of those former ministers—negotiated a resignation date with the former president that ended up being one single day after the seven-year anniversary of his appointment, securing him additional funds on top of an already significant pension. That tells you everything about the priorities of the former government when it comes to parolees and community safety. The soft-on-crime approach taken by Labor has directly resulted in poorer outcomes for communities and victims. This bill will add to protections for the community to ensure Queenslanders will not be set aside when urgent parole decisions are made under pressure, and it backs our corrective services supervisors and our Parole Board to ensure actions are taken in the best interests of our community. I support that bill.

I want to address the amendments which the member for Aspley just spoke to, which have been circulated by the Minister for Corrective Services in relation to the Transport Infrastructure Act 1994. I can advise that those changes relate only to the ability of the Minister for Transport and Main Roads to make a tolling declaration. In particular—this is important—this allows the minister to make a declaration to amend only one element of tolling amendments. The amendments retain transparency and accountability in declaring tolls, charges and payment arrangements for Queensland toll roads. I can hear the scare campaign from those opposite—I will get to their petty political games in a second. These amendments also include the repeal of the section which currently limits the minister's ability to make further toll declarations for the Gateway Motorway and Logan Motorway.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr McDonald): Members, the interjections are not being taken.

Mr MICKELBERG: I would love to, but I would not have time to get through it all. Repealing this section will make legislative requirements for tolling arrangements consistent across the Queensland toll road network.

I have seen the social media posts from those opposite and I can categorically state that these changes have nothing to do with the Story Bridge. The Story Bridge is the little metal one. This is about the big concrete ones—the Gateway Bridge and the Logan Motorway. These amendments are administrative in nature, despite the scare campaign. They are so pathetic and bereft of ideas that they sit there and carp away rather than addressing these issues when they were in government. Had they done their job, we would not be here tonight addressing these issues. Those opposite failed in every regard when it came to governing this state, and it is left to this side of the House to fix up their mess. These amendments are administrative in nature. They are needed to reduce unnecessary burden and expense, making legislative requirements for tolling arrangements consistent across Queensland's toll network. This is about making tolling arrangements consistent and reducing red tape across the network.

Those opposite want to purvey mistruths and falsehoods to suit their own pathetic political narrative. I categorically state again: this has nothing to do with the Story Bridge. It has nothing to do with increasing tolls in some sort of 'secret plan in the budget', I think I heard from the member from Aspley. The budget will be handed down and those opposite will be found wanting because this has nothing to do with that. This is about fixing their mess, making the process simpler and ensuring there is consistency across the tolling network. For those opposite to try to play pathetic political games says more about the Labor Party—they do not want to do the serious business of governing. They have abrogated that responsibility. This is about section 93AA of the TIA—only that; nothing else. It is not about tolling roads that do not have tolls right now. It is not about secretly increasing tolls on the Logan Motorway or the Gateway Motorway.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr MICKELBERG: Those opposite would do well to listen rather than sit there, interject and run pathetic little scare campaigns—pathetic scare campaigns from the member for Inala.

Ms Mullen interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Jordan, you are warned.

Mrs Nightingale interjected.

Mr MICKELBERG: Jump on your feet, member for Inala, and have a chat.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Inala, you are warned.

Mr MICKELBERG: Those opposite peddle fear because they have nothing else. They have nothing else because they do not have policy. They do not stand for anything and they will not accept that Queenslanders have found them wanting. They just will not accept it. Until they accept it, we will continue to come in here and fix up Labor's mess. We will continue to come in here and fix up a decade of Labor failure because that is what Queenslanders voted for in October last year.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: For the benefit of members, I could clearly hear the member for Buderim so I did not need to stop him while he was on his feet, but I point out that the member for Jordan and the member for Inala are both warned.