




Speech By
David Lee

MEMBER FOR HERVEY BAY

Record of Proceedings, 10 June 2025

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

 **Mr LEE** (Hervey Bay—LNP) (4.27 pm): I rise to speak to the cognate debate, and the subject matter of my contribution today deals exclusively with the Corrective Services (Parole Board) Amendment Bill 2025. This bill is a critical safeguard for community safety in my electorate of Hervey Bay and will ensure that initial parole decisions, often made in urgent circumstances, have an appropriate level of oversight by a suitably convened board. The Crisafulli government is committed to transparency, accountability and stronger governance in Parole Board Queensland after a decade of Labor's crisis.

This bill will empower the Parole Board with the authority to review decisions made by a prescribed board member in all circumstances. A prescribed board member means the president, a deputy president or a professional board member. Parole is a privilege, not an entitlement. Parole is the conditional release of a person from prison before the end of their sentence. It is a method intended to prevent reoffending, so the parolee is supervised in the community by corrective services officers until the end of their sentence.

The Parole Board of Queensland plays a critical role within the criminal justice system. This bill aims to empower the Parole Board with the authority to review all decisions made by a prescribed board member after a request for immediate suspension from Queensland Corrective Services, including circumstances where a prescribed board member decides not to suspend parole. To be clear, this bill is about rectifying a cavernous gap in the legislation where a prescribed board member decides not to suspend parole.

If a prisoner on parole fails to comply with their parole order or they pose an unacceptable risk to the community then the Queensland Corrective Services CEO may ask the Parole Board to suspend the prisoner's parole order and issue a warrant for the prisoner's arrest. To expedite the process, the decision could be made by a prescribed board member. If so, then the board must convene within two business days to either confirm the decision, cancel the parole order or set aside the decision. However, in circumstances where a prescribed board member does not decide to suspend a prisoner's parole order—in other words, keep them in the community—the Corrective Services Act 2006 is silent on allowing the board to convene to review the decision. This is the nub of the issue that this bill is focused upon.

Whilst there have been historical amendments to sections 208A to 208C in the act, in recent years it has become evident that there was not a clear head of power for the board to review all urgent suspension decisions. This bill rectifies that by amending section 208C to require the board to review all decisions made by a single prescribed board member. This is an important safeguard to ensure that decisions made by one person are reviewed by an appropriately convened board to provide consistency in decision-making.

Clause 5 of the bill includes a validating provision to address instances where the board reviewed prescribed board member decisions to not suspend parole in the past. This ensures that board decisions that were made to return an offender on parole to custody, based on evidence and an individual risk assessment, are considered valid.

Let me now turn to Labor's desperately feeble claim in their statement of reservation that there is no legislative gap in the Corrective Services Act 2006. Labor's argument is falsely premised on a strikingly biased and selective quote from Mr Woodford, the President of Parole Board Queensland, in the relevant committee's transcript of proceedings. It is critical that Mr Woodford's oral statements be taken within the context of his overall oral submission. Mr Woodford's opening statement to the committee stated—

The amendments that the bill seeks to bring in will correct a substantial gap that has existed in the parole suspension framework for some time, though, I must note, that it has only properly been understood in recent times.

He furthermore states—

... what I said at the start is there is a hole there and, as I tried to be fair and balanced to indicate, it is something that has only recently been discovered.

Mr Woodford then said in his closing remarks—

... I did want to confirm that we perceive there is a gap. This would not have come before you if we thought there was a better solution or there was no solution needed. I want to be crystal clear about that, that practically there is a gap.

Queensland Labor's desperate foray into section 205 of the Corrective Services Act 2006 and citing the Queensland Court of Appeal decision in *Foster v Shaddock & Ors* is simply a distraction from the existing substantial procedural gap in the parole suspension framework. The former floundering Labor corrective services minister squandered opportunities to identify and fix up this procedural gap: Labor botched it.

Section 205 of the act is a broad power designed for general Parole Board decision-making, but it is unsuitable in high-risk, time-critical scenarios where a rapid response is essential. Mr Woodford further stated in correspondence dated 7 May—

... relying solely on section 205 to manage urgent community safety risks would not in my view cure the serious issue with the legislation.

I table a copy of that correspondence.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 7 May 2025, from the President, Parole Board Queensland, Mr Michael Woodford, to the Chair, Governance, Energy and Finance Committee and member for Coomera, Mr Michael Crandon MP, regarding parole matters impacted by the legislative proposal contained within the Corrective Services (Parole Board) Amendment Bill 2025 [607](#).

The amendments to section 208C are integral to providing a practical and sustainable safeguard to the existing legislative gap in the Corrective Services Act 2006. This amendment maintains the board's current powers to respond to urgent suspension matters and acknowledges the real-world demand of parole decision-making. A procedural gap exists in section 208A. The scheme set out in section 208A to section 208C provides for immediate suspension by a prescribed board member which provides for timely action whilst maintaining community safety. This is an alternative suspension framework to the board's general powers to suspend or cancel a parole order under section 205.

Decisions under section 208B by a prescribed board member to suspend a parole order can be reviewed by the board under section 208C. However—I will state again:—where a prescribed board member chooses not to suspend a parole order under section 208B, there is no legislative basis to review that decision. That is the crux of this bill. This is the substantive procedural gap identified in the amendment bill.

Before I close, let me say what a refreshing change it is to have an energetic, hardworking corrective services minister in Laura Gerber, who is across her brief. It is a real contrast to Labor's former bumbling corrective services minister, the member for Pine Rivers, whose conduct at last year's July 2024 estimates hearing was reminiscent of Sergeant Schultz in that comical series *Hogan's Heroes*—'I know nothing!' Labor clearly knows nothing when it comes to addressing procedural gaps in the corrective services legislation. We are cleaning up Labor's mess. I commend this cognate bill to the House.