




Speech By  
**Kendall Morton**

**MEMBER FOR CALOUNDRA**

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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**

 **Ms MORTON** (Caloundra—LNP) (3.16 pm): I rise in support of the cognate bills before the House today—in particular, the Corrective Services (Parole Board) Amendment Bill 2025, a bill that puts victims first, that puts public safety first and that finally fixes another mess Labor left behind.

What we inherited from the Labor government was a parole system riddled with loopholes, delays and dysfunction. That dysfunction was more dangerous than the gaping hole Labor left in the Corrective Services Act, a hole that protected the rights of prisoners but left the rights of victims and the wider community exposed. Under Labor, if a parolee was returned to prison, the full Parole Board was mandated to review that decision, protecting the prisoner's rights. But if Queensland Corrective Services asked for a parolee to be returned to custody because of a serious community risk and a single board member said, 'No, let them stay in the community,' there was no requirement for the board to review that decision. Let that sink in. Labor gave convicted criminals more legal safeguards than the innocent Queenslanders they were released among. What we saw was a system that put prisoners first, while victims were an afterthought.

This bill will fix that failure. Under the leadership of Premier Crisafulli, we are restoring balance, ensuring that community safety carries the same legal weight as prisoner rights. The bill gives the Parole Board the express power and the obligation to review decisions where a single board member declines a request from Queensland Corrective Services to suspend a parolee and return them to custody. These are not trivial matters. These are decisions made by trained officers who believe a person cannot be safely managed in the community.

The President of the Parole Board himself, Mr Michael Woodford, made it clear that this bill corrects a substantial gap in the parole framework. He went further, calling it a 'legislative oversight' and said, 'I want to be crystal clear ... practically, there is a gap.' Instead of acknowledging this gap and fixing it, what did the Labor government do? They denied it existed, they cherrypicked quotes and they tried to sweep their failure under the rug. But Queenslanders are not fools. They know when their safety is being treated as a second priority.

For the record, it is important to note the Parole Board has confirmed these changes will not create any additional costs to the government. This government is taking decisive action to fix the broken system. We have appointed new leadership to the Parole Board. We are backing our frontline officers in community corrections—officers who make the tough calls about when someone on parole is simply too dangerous to remain in the community. We are legislating for oversight—real, enforceable, community focused oversight. Under this bill, decisions made by individual board members to keep a parolee in the community when QCS has raised serious safety concerns must now go before the full board, just like when the opposite occurs. This is not just a tweak; this is a correction of a serious imbalance and a safeguard that the community deserves.

We are also ensuring legal certainty for past decisions made by the full board in response to unacceptable community risk. Section 490ZP of this bill validates decisions made where the board overruled individual board members and returned parolees to prison in the interest of safety. Labor would rather you believe those decisions should not stand. This provision is not retrospective for the sake of political games; it is retrospective to ensure the safety of Queenslanders is not undone by Labor's legislative laziness. Let me be absolutely clear to every Queenslander watching or listening: if someone on parole shows behaviour that puts your safety at risk, this government will not wait for a tragedy. We will act. We will act decisively. This bill ensures there is power to do just that.

You will hear arguments from the other side—all points that likely continue to prioritise and preference the rights of offenders over the rights of victims, which I am sure is a familiar position to most of us to come from the other side. In a summary that makes that clear: if Queensland Corrective Services makes an urgent recommendation to revoke parole conditions and then an individual board member makes a decision for the parolee to remain in the community, under the amended legislation this decision would require review by the full board, keeping in mind that the initial decision could have been made in the middle of the night in urgent circumstances. Oversight, governance and proper process can only be considered a good thing when community safety is at risk.

Further to this, under current legislation, safeguards exist for offenders but not for the community. Let that sink in: once again, safeguards have existed for offenders but not victims. This is a theme we have witnessed throughout a decade of government and decision-making—something we are committed to correcting and delivering for the safety of our communities.

Labor's position is that the community does not, in fact, need this safeguard, that there is no legislative gap and that this is a solution in search of a problem. Well, tell that to the victims. Tell that to the Queenslanders living next door to parolees whose behaviour has spiralled but who were left in the community on the say-so of one individual board member. This government says enough is enough and we are drawing a line. This bill is sharp. It is targeted. It is absolutely necessary. It restores balance to the parole system, it empowers the Parole Board to act decisively, it protects Queenslanders and it fixes what Labor got wrong. Where community safety is at risk, I ask the House: what could be more important? I thank the ministers for their work in keeping our communities safe.

Given these bills are being debated in cognate, I would also like to acknowledge the awful tragedy our Sunshine Coast community experienced in the stabbing of 16-year-old Balin Stewart, who lost his life. Balin was a victim of knife crime. I would like to honour Balin's life and the work of his incredible parents, Michael and Kerri-Lyn, in advocating for stronger laws and educating a generation on the reality of knife crime in order to influence meaningful change. To experience such a tragedy and to continue to honour Balin's life through positive transformations is invaluable to the entire community of the Sunshine Coast. To Michael and Kerri-Lyn: we are all grateful for your contribution and in awe of your dedication and strength. Community safety affects us all.