




Speech By
Hon. Meaghan Scanlon

MEMBER FOR GAVEN

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**EXPANDING ADULT CRIME, ADULT TIME AND TAKING A STRONG STANCE
ON DRUGS AND ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Hon. MAJ SCANLON** (Gaven—ALP) (3.47 pm): Frankly, listening to the member for Currumbin lecture this House about university politics, given her performance in this House, is laughable. The Premier is a very clever politician and this bill has his fingerprints all over it. He wants to sneak through these laws to try and disguise from Queenslanders that they are winding back drug diversion laws that work. It is not just us saying that. We had five former police commissioners back Labor's laws. The police asked us to implement these laws. Health experts asked us to implement these reforms that those opposite want to wind back.

I suspect the reason they have cobbled together all of these reforms is because they do not want these reforms to see the light of day. If they truly believed in every section of these reforms, they would let them be appropriately scrutinised. Clearly they do not have confidence in every element of the bill because otherwise they would allow them to be scrutinised on their merits, and clearly they are afraid of that. There were organisations, like the Australian Medication Association, that wrote in a media release that they were disappointed they were not invited to appear before the committee, despite their asking to appear. That demonstrates that those opposite are trying to hide something.

As has been mentioned by many other speakers, we know that drug diversion laws work, despite what the member for Currumbin is trying to peddle. The majority of people who were given a drug diversion warning never came in contact with the system again.

Mrs Gerber interjected.

Ms SCANLON: I hear the interjection from the member for Currumbin. If she truly believed in what she was saying she would send this back to the committee. I suspect that she does not believe it, and that is why she does not want these laws to be scrutinised. She does not want to hear from the five former police commissioners whom she is now ignoring. She does not want to hear from the Public Service. When we asked them questions during the committee briefing, they were very clear to say that this was a policy decision by government, which we all know is code for 'we don't really support this, but the Crisafulli government is making us appear here to defend their laws that no-one else wants to support'. In fact, the only stakeholder, effectively, that supported these reforms was an organisation that appeared but could not back up what it was saying with evidence. We have nurses, doctors and police all saying that these laws should not be wound back, yet those opposite are deliberately ignoring all of those experts.

We also know that this will have a significant impact on our legal and justice system. In fact, the Productivity Commission report—those opposite like talking about productivity commissions, just not when it does not suit their political narrative—estimates that 258,000 police hours would be saved every single year through drug diversion laws, yet the police minister will come in here and try to defend these laws. I look forward to hearing his contribution, given there have been five former police commissioners who have supported Labor's laws that they are winding back and they are going to place police under more pressure. Hundreds of thousands of hours will be spent going after low-level possession drug use

rather than serious crime. Every time police do not respond to a serious crime in this state we will be asking why the government would wind back laws that have meant they now cannot go after those serious crimes.

I heard the member for Currumbin mention some of the data. The data shows—the data we have been able to see so far anyway—that from May 2024 to March this year 32,000 people were diverted under this program and 83 per cent of them had no further contact with the program. Again, if those opposite feel confident with winding back these laws they should release the final report. Do not spend money on it and then just quietly shelve it. If they have confidence in this reform they should show us the evidence, the full evaluation. Again, this government are not interested in facts; all they are interested in is politics.

We come to this debate in good faith. We have engaged in the committee process thoughtfully, as we have on the previous iterations of this reform. This is all about politics for those opposite. They want this to be about us when we want this to be about Queenslanders. We ultimately want to see good health reform. We want to make sure victims of crime are supported. Frankly, I get a bit frustrated with those opposite trying to suggest that they are the only people who are advocating for victims of crime. We have former police officers on this side. My father was a police officer. I did a law degree to ensure Queenslanders were given the justice they deserve. I have also been the victim of crime. The fact that these people come in here and try to say that they have some sort of moral hierarchy over crime and victims is laughable, particularly given the range of reforms they are blocking right now. They will not act on the recommendations of the inquiry into institutional child sexual abuse, yet they come in here and say that they can claim some sort of high moral ground on justice.

There are real consequences from these reforms. We heard some of the medical experts give real case examples of what these reforms would mean. There was a case study of a 24-year-old man, and I will call him John. He was found at a train station with heroin. He was offered diversion. He completed it. Two months later he was found with heroin again. Again, he was offered diversion. This time a peer support worker helped him into opioid treatment, re-enrolled him in a barbering course and connected him to a structured support program, and now he is doing an apprenticeship. This shows that a health-based response works and that criminalising people makes things worse. That is effectively what that submission said. He said that he is now off the drugs he was taking. He said—

I haven't used in over a year ... I have mates who are stuck in that life, in and out of jail. It could easily be me.

He was given a chance. He was given a health-based response, one that those opposite are now taking away.

Mrs Gerber: He'd still get that under this bill.

Ms SCANLON: I hear the interjection from the member for Currumbin. You clearly were not listening to the circumstances, and you clearly have not been listening to any of the health professionals.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Krause): Member for Gaven, direct your comments through the chair, please. Member for Currumbin, you do the same too, please.

Dr ROWAN: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I know that some latitude has been given in relation to the amendment, but there are many matters now that relate to the substance of the bill as opposed to being confined to the amendment as moved by the member for Bulimba. I understand that some latitude has been provided, but I would ask you to consider that matter, Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: It is difficult to separate the context of the substance of the bill from the procedural motion before us. You have had a fair go, member for Gaven, at explaining the context. If you could bring some of your comments back to the procedural motion before us and link the context to it, that would be appreciated.

Ms SCANLON: It is important that this section of the bill goes back to the committee, as our amendment outlines. Former police commissioner Ian Stewart said—

Expanding drug diversion ... will free up police to concentrate on recidivist criminal offenders, and those who profit from the tragedy of drug addiction ...

He said—

Expanding drug diversion is not about going soft on crime. Just the opposite.

By ignoring that, those opposite are ignoring a very distinguished former police commissioner. Legal Aid said—

The expanded program has avoided approximately \$4.58 million in Magistrates costs ... \$2.27 million in police resources ...

All of these things need to be appropriately considered. They have not been because they have been cobbled together in a bill that deserves more consideration.