




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MOGGILL

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PENALTIES AND SENTENCES (QUEENSLAND SENTENCING ADVISORY COUNCIL) AMENDMENT BILL 2016

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (8.19 pm): I rise to address the Penalties and Sentences (Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council) Amendment Bill 2016 now before the Queensland parliament. At the outset I acknowledge the outstanding contribution made to this debate by the member for Broadwater. The contribution of the member for Broadwater was passionate, articulate and absolutely evidence based. We also heard from the member for Mermaid Beach. The speech he made was very positive and evidence based as well.

Mr Walker: Eloquent.

Dr ROWAN: I take that interjection. The primary objective of this bill is to establish a sentencing advisory council in Queensland. Victoria, New South Wales, Tasmania and South Australia all have sentencing advisory councils, so clearly this is not the first time such an entity has been created. Indeed, we should remember that a similar body was abolished by the previous LNP government. In establishing another such body, whose budget is \$1.8 million per year, there is a clear need to be certain that it can and will justify both its funding and purpose and will deliver a real outcome for Queensland. I note that the previous body between 2010 and 2012, when it was abolished, provided no advice whatsoever to the Court of Appeal in terms of guidelines for judgements. Further, equivalent bodies in other jurisdictions do not appear to have delivered a value benefit proposition for taxpayers in other states.

Value for money and respect for the taxpayer dollar are surely an essential underpinning of all deliberations in this House. There is a clear onus on this House to be certain that there is in fact a need and that such an advisory council can meet that need and deliver an enhanced outcome with respect to sentencing.

I also refer to other non-financial aspects of the bill. If the members of such an advisory council are to contribute usefully to such a broad domain as the sentencing of a wide range of offenders over a perhaps even wider range of offences, then members of such an advisory council require a correspondingly broad range of backgrounds and expertise. I note within the proposals by the government that at least one council member must be of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background. I also note that members of the reviewing Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee further recommended that at least one woman be included. Regrettably, as is so often the case with this Labor government, whilst its intention may have some limited merit, the process, structure and implementation are often completely flawed, particularly given that the Palaszczuk Labor government is soft on outlawed criminal motorcycle gangs.

As I have argued, the broad scope of this advisory council demands that members with a wide range of professional expertise are vital to its potential effective functioning. There is no point in simply establishing an advisory council of lawyers to simply advise other lawyers. Technical legal expertise

within the advisory council is absolutely essential, but so is the real-world experience of members drawn, for example, from social work, police, employment and rehabilitation services, to name but a few.

The continual quest of sentencing reform is to reduce reoffending rates. Therefore, I ask: if there is no experience in the advisory council of the real-life consequences of street violence, drug addiction and serial unemployment, how can the advisory council usefully advise on sentencing strategies to reduce reoffending rates? In my view, the composition of this advisory council is crucial to any potential success, or in this case failure, of the legislation. Whilst proposing a gender balance and cultural diversification, the legislation is otherwise silent on this. In moving this bill, it was stated—

The establishment of the sentencing advisory council is also an important part of the process to improve the effectiveness of sentencing practices to support the principles of sentencing, namely punishment, deterrence, rehabilitation, community protection and denunciation.

Ultimately, how certain can we be that this advisory council will have a composition that ensures, or would even be capable of, let alone actually able to confer, any tangible benefits whatsoever on the community that ultimately pays for it with its taxes? Unfortunately, I believe that the proposed implementation of this body in Queensland will result in wasted public funds which might be better applied elsewhere in front-line services including via Legal Aid or community legal centres.

The Liberal National Party supports evidence based public policy initiatives. Additional bureaucracy that does not add value can never be supported. The Palaszczuk Labor government should take strong action against criminal gangs. The Labor government should ensure community safety for all Queenslanders, including my constituents in Moggill, by tackling all forms of crime including illegality uncovered by the Royal Commission into Trade Union Governance and Corruption. Since we have seen the findings handed down by Commissioner Dyson Heydon, so far in Queensland none of those recommendations have been adopted or implemented by the Palaszczuk Labor government.

Only the LNP has the track record of keeping our communities safe via evidence based legislation and the appropriate resourcing of our Queensland Police Service and other relevant agencies. We know that Labor is soft on crime. Labor is absolutely soft on criminal gangs. The safety of Queenslanders is at risk because of this Palaszczuk Labor government and certainly I oppose this bill.