




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

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POLICE POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (4.01 pm): I rise to add my input to this important bill. As a former police officer, the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act is one that I know very well. From the outset let me say that policing is not an easy job. There are days like today, no doubt, when a number of police officers around this state are under enormous stress. All of us in this place do owe a debt of gratitude to the men and women in blue. We must take the necessary steps to support them in their work and to keep our communities safe and, more importantly, to give them the resources in terms of the legislation that they need to do their job properly.

Currently the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000 provides for access information powers which enable police to apply for an order from a judge or a JP that requires a person to provide access information—for example, a password—or any assistance necessary to gain access to an electronic device so that information on or accessible through the device can be obtained by the police. The powers are generally used with respect to child sex offences and organised crime. However, they can be used in relation to any offence that forms the basis of a search warrant application or a crime scene threshold offence that are approved by a judge or a justice of the peace.

With advances in new technologies, offenders such as child sex offenders are using cloud services to manage and promote their criminal activities. Access to storage of incriminating information on traditional storage mediums is clearly articulated under current laws. However, the current definition of 'stored' prescribed in the PPRA has created ambiguity with respect to accessing information and the scope of information accessible in cloud services. The bill makes amendments to resolve the ambiguity and to make it clear that any information can be accessed within the terms of the judicial order on or through an electronic device. In a world of increasing use of technology, it is important that our police have the ability to move with changes in technology and to have the tools available to them, to have the necessary access and the resources to deal with such activities.

Our police deal with crime and tragedies every day, and without doubt every police officer has had an interaction with an offender who preys on the weak in our communities. Very few offenders will make a police officer's skin crawl like those who commit child sex offences. As representatives of the community and as legislators, we have a responsibility to assist in the apprehension of child sex offenders and we have a responsibility to ensure the legal system is properly resourced to ensure these people face the full force of our legal system.

Changes to technology seem to be happening at an ever-increasing rate. To ensure that our police have access to every single skerrick of evidence against child sex offenders is something that no-one in this place should be opposing. Of course, police also need access to this type of evidence when dealing with offences such as murder and in our ongoing efforts to protect the general public from terrorism related activities.

The fact that we on this side of the House want child sex offenders held to account means that we will support this section of the bill, but it is worth noting one area where the LNP differs from the current government. That difference is when it comes to the ongoing supervision of dangerous, violent sex offenders. The Minister has taken one step, but I would encourage him to adopt the LNP's approach to the supervision of these offenders.

I will move on to the changes proposed in the Weapons Act. In regional Queensland, weapons are quite often not only used for recreation but also used as a tool. Many times I have mentioned the challenge of increasing medical services and having access to those services in the regions. Those challenges make the amendment relating to suspension periods even more relevant, let alone the backlog in QCAT that this government has overseen. The fact that licence holders require a medical practitioner to support the overturning of a suspension means that regional Queenslanders need more time to have access to a fair and just process. I support that particular amendment.

When it comes to the requirement for armourers to decide an appropriate weapons licence for any weapon that is modified, it is logical, in my opinion, that we support that amendment. Whilst the vast majority of weapons licence holders are law-abiding citizens, we must ensure that we address any opportunity for criminals to access firearms and the modifications that go with that.

I referred earlier to people who prey on the weak in our society. The unfortunate reality is that there are people who target the weak through the sex industry. For that reason I welcome the minister's decision to amend this bill to ensure that this industry and the protection of the workers in that industry receive the appropriate level of scrutiny. Given the amendment, I want to put on the record that I was appalled by the proposal to make the failure to keep records of the proof of age of sex workers a simple offence. I will not be opposing this particular bill as it does have a number of common-sense and practical amendments that will certainly make the lives of our police officers a lot easier.