Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2026

Sandy Bolton – MP for Noosa

This Bill targets metal theft which has major impacts on communities across Queensland including in my electorate, with copper thefts at the former TAFE site and the Cooroy and Eumundi exits off the Bruce Highway. Such theft vandalises safety lighting and signage, creating dangerous conditions for night-time drivers. I note that last Parliament, the former Transport and Resources Committee conducted an inquiry into scrap metal theft and I refer to that committee's report for some of my information.

Metal theft impacts all aspects of our community lives and pockets. Parks, sporting facilities, telecommunications and internet cabling, agricultural infrastructure, batteries, solar panels, tools and trailers. As well our power networks, with Energy Qld submitting this crime costs them over $4.5 million per year, which is passed on to all of us! This has to stop! Master Electricians said theft of unconnected copper, stripping of transformers, and cutting high-voltage cabling posed serious safety risks to workers, as well as disruptions and higher costs for customers. So how is this being addressed?

Two new offences for theft and wilful damage will be added to the Criminal Code under this legislation.

Where a person's life or health is endangered, or during a natural disaster, increased penalties of up to 25 years prison, 14 years for those targeting public facilities and infrastructure, and up to 3 years for those dealing in stolen metals.

I asked why these thefts have been occurring?

Copper prices are at an all-time high driven by 50% US tariffs, stealing it is quick and needs only simple tools. Submitters explained it is an instant source of cash and crypto in the highly active second hard market. Emerging technologies to help prevent thefts or rapidly alert authorities should be supported by government, plus urgent funding for those repairs required to keep our drivers and communities safe!

Other than scrap metal theft, this omnibus bill contains mostly technical clarifications or operational adjustments which are well supported by submitters. However one aspect is more controversial regarding media disclosure of information from the Queensland Police Service (QPS) and courts. The bill gives a legislative basis for provision by the QPS of information to accredited media entities to identify when particular criminal proceedings are listed.

The Courier Mail and Australia's Right to Know Coalition of Media Organisations submitted that it is unclear from the Bill whether the names and charges of alleged offenders could be published without QPS first making a public media release. This complexity potentially impacts reporting on nearly 150k crimes per month and exposes journalists to the risk of offence or civil liability.

Given that the only recommendation by the committee was that the bill be passed, despite the concerns of stakeholders, no resolution to this uncertainty has been provided so the issue remains, another example of legislation rushed, without proper consultation.

A Courier Mail editorial from March this year described what has occurred and unfortunately continues in legislation brought before the House:
The laws were drafted without input from those they are meant to help… The unintended consequences are the result of (the) Attorney-General not having consulted with anybody before introducing the legislation.

This is a very dangerous precedent in the only state with a unicameral parliament…so no upper house where Bills are properly reviewed. We worry about this Bill, but we also worry about the precedent… An email the day it is to be introduced is not consultation.'

This is not a new occurrence, nor a precedent, as we have been raising. There are multiple references in this chamber, day in and day out over the last decade, of system failures through abuse of power by sitting governments and loopholes they will not address.
The question is at what point will governments stop this abuse, and waste of taxpayers' money through seesawing of legislation, and actually support an independent review to end these abuses?

It has been said that no one wants to see even more politicians via a reintroduction of an upper house to address the lack of transparency, accountability and representation. However as I said only weeks ago, we are at a tipping point.

The outcome of the Fitzgerald Inquiry was for an open and accountable government instead of winner-takes-all politics. We have not achieved that and based on the lack of political will from either side of the house when in power to do so, it is now up to voters to end this disrespect and realise a system where absolute power, or majority governments, become part of our past.