

knows is a massive problem—and attempting to ensure we have justice delivered in a timely fashion. Feed into that word 'justice'.

The whole experience of the judicial system must be just for those who are seeking to see their offender found guilty of the crime they committed and to also receive the punishments that fit. The use of audio-visual link technology—as the Member for Goyder pointed out, we are a huge Northern Territory—provides not only a timelier hearing, but a cheaper hearing for the state. The safeguards ensure that it does not degrade the justice in the court, but it allows for a more inter-connected Northern Territory, and for those in the court process all over the Northern Territory to have access. That is a fantastic thing.

Interestingly, we made a specific point that we do not think should be specified regarding the technology, because technology is changing rapidly. Through the committee process we believed in keeping that term broad because we do not know what the future holds in improving technology and audio-visual links. There will be that open discretion in the legislation also, so that is an important point to speak about, and it was something I found interesting through the committee process.

The safeguards improve the courts' ability to issue warrants for witnesses who do not attend court, and that is something that will be welcomed in the electorate of Drysdale. They also provide the NT Police Force with flexibility to manage arrest outcomes for court-ordered warrants, remove and update obsolete and outdated administrative provisions, and make amendments to align the Act with the relevant legislation.

I commend the Attorney-General for what has been a huge reform agenda, and—I can assure you—it has been welcomed by the people of Drysdale. Where crime has had a huge impact on Drysdale, the impact continues. However, we are not victims in Drysdale; we are saying that we have had enough, and we are restoring the balance of the Northern Territory. We are doing that through a strengthened police force, more officers and PPSOs. The PPSOs will bring huge relief to Drysdale. Heaven knows we need support across public housing and the bus network and in our shopping centres and our public spaces. We want those police officers to be armed and to have the necessary powers to start dealing with these crazy levels of antisocial behaviour that have plagued the Northern Territory for too long.

We have invested a record spend of over \$1.7bn, and what we see here is the Attorney-General ensuring that the system can handle that investment. We are investing in the frontline services for cracking down as crimes are committed and then the Attorney-General is investing to make sure the system can handle that. At the same time we have the Corrections minister ensuring that we have investment in Corrections.

We are signalling to the people of the Northern Territory that this government is attacking the entire problem of law and order from the frontline police officers who deal with the crime all the way through the courts and to Corrections. What does this do? This ensures justice is being restored. It ensures that we will have fewer victims in Drysdale and that victims of crimes will see a faster outcome in the courts, which is important for many reasons. My priority is the victim of the crime and their wellbeing, being able to get back on their feet and safely enjoy Drysdale.

I thank the Attorney-General and the entire CLP team for the law and order reforms our government is delivering for the people of the Northern Territory.

Ms BOOTHBY (Attorney-General)(in reply): Madam Speaker, I thank the working group for providing its input in making this Bill come to life. There were people from all sorts of different groups, including the Chief Judge and a number of stakeholders who put forward these recommendations to me and the department to have this work done.

I also thank the Legislative Scrutiny Committee members for their detailed report, and I am pleased to see the committee recommended the Bill be passed.

The committee also recommended a post-implementation review be conducted after 12 months of operation, to assess the impact of proposed section 49EB on detained defendants with communication difficulties, and the adequacy of necessary facilities to support the effective use of audiovisual link. A number of times the Chief Judge has supported audiovisual links, and that is why the working group put forward that recommendation.

Regarding the second recommendation, the Attorney-General's Department is preparing to monitor several legislative amendments and policy initiatives related to the government strategy to reduce crime. That is something we do; it is part and parcel of introducing new policy and legislation.

I have asked the department to have regard for recommendation 2 of the committee and to ensure that any reviews conducted adequately assess the impact of new section 49EB on detained defendants who have communication difficulties, and the adequacy of necessary facilities to support the effective use of audiovisual links.

This Bill makes changes to the *Local Court (Criminal Procedure) Act*, the *Bail Act*, the *Evidence Act*, the *Local Court Act*, the *Misuse of Drugs Act* and the *Sentencing Act*. It is a comprehensive package of reform.

I thank everyone for their contributions. There were so many things you highlighted about why it is important we make these changes.

There was commentary, it might have been the Member for Daly, about some of the feedback through the Legislative Scrutiny Committee. I take all that on board.

People said that there were things they did not agree on with the working group recommendations regarding difference pieces of legislation. I make the point that there are a lot of mixed views about this kind of legislation or reform. It will not please every person, but I am getting on and doing it. Someone has to do it. The Act itself has not been properly looked at for about 100 years, so it is time we look at it and get it done. There will be tweaks along the way, because that is how legislation works.

Even in the report itself—I am trying to remember whether it was NAAJA specifically saying there were concerns, but NAAJA is on the working group. I am not pointing it out for any negative reason; I am just saying that not everyone agrees on everything all of the time. That is okay, and I am all right with that.

I will do the reform, and I will not make apologies for it. I know it will make things better. We will get feedback in 12 months' time or along the way, because I catch up with these stakeholders a lot. I am always in rooms with them. I go to the court to have a look and I speak to the judges and everyone in this system. I hear loud and clear what needs to happen, and I am happy to keep doing that work.

I wanted to make that point, as I think it is important.

I have always said that there is always so much work to do. This is almost like the first step in a lot of other steps that we have done in the justice system and courts. The same working group continues to meet and there will be a lot more work to come.

I thank the Attorney-General's Department for all the work it has done on this. It takes a lot of work to get to this point, bring it to parliament and have it pass. There are a lot of things I could say, but a lot of things have been said already.

I commend the Bill to the Assembly.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a second time.

Consideration in detail

Clauses 1 to 5, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 6:

Mr YOUNG: Chair, we want to move an amendment to repeal clause 6. We will not put it to a vote because of the vigil outside, so I will just speak to it and leave my commentary there.

As I stated earlier in my second reading contribution, current legislation and practice already provide sufficient options and these amendments may result in unintended risk or delays for clients and proceedings. We acknowledge the court retains the general discretion to the deal with charges, joined or separately, and the prosecution retains its ability to join charges. This Bill provides an extra step, is not necessary and could result in additional challenges and potential unintended prejudice during proceedings.

A number of submissions to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee recommended that clause 6 to be removed. On that basis, I oppose clause 6.

J DAVIS: Can you explain the necessity for this amendment when section 51(1) already provides that the charges for any number of offences may be joined in the same complaint?