

Go Card

Mr DICKSON (Buderim—LNP) (11.51 am): I rise to speak on behalf of the public transport users in my electorate of Buderim. They would like to be able to take advantage of the government's wonderful go card system and make their travel cheaper and easier. Unfortunately, unless they are able to purchase and top up their go cards online, they are out of luck. In its wisdom, the government has failed to provide a single retail outlet for go cards in the entire Buderim electorate—not one. The minister and her bureaucrats may not have been to Buderim recently. If they looked at our electorate, they would discover that there are plenty of potential retail outlets that could handle the go cards. They would also discover that there is a significant population of older residents, many of whom do not use computers but do use buses. In fact, these residents would like more buses so they can get out and about, particularly if they no longer drive a vehicle.

To give you an example, I have an elderly constituent who was thrilled last year when TransLink extended the local bus route so she can now use it. In the past, it was too far for her to walk to a bus stop. She has been a regular bus user ever since and it has made a big difference to her life, but she cannot buy a go card to use this bus—not without catching a bus to the customer service centre in Maroochydore. They offer a limited service there. You can buy a \$20 go card, provided you have cash and do not want to use EFTPOS or credit. Yes, people without computers can buy go cards over the phone or send in a form, but older people in particular often do not like to buy over the phone. They like to do it in person, and that is their right.

When it comes to services like public transport, we should ensure that everyone has equal access. We should not be discriminating in favour of those who are used to technology and feel comfortable using it. Older people, like my constituent, want to stay independent and in their own homes. To do that, we need to make sure they have access to good public transport options. The bureaucrats who designed the go card system should come down from their city offices and look at how the system really works for the people who use it. Go cards should be widely available through retail outlets that are convenient to the people who want to buy them. It is time the minister and her department took action to make it happen.

Koala Protection

Mr RYAN (Morayfield—ALP) (11.53 am): I rise to give my support to recent positive news that this state Labor government will introduce new conservation measures to protect koalas in priority koala bushland habitats. Koala populations in South East Queensland, and particularly in the Morayfield state electorate, have been declining for a number of years and these progressive announcements will mean that this vulnerable species will be further protected. The new package of measures will protect priority koala habitat, rehabilitate habitat impacted by development and create new habitat for future koala populations.

The conservation measures include: a ban on all habitat clearing development in priority areas until new planning instruments are finalised; an initial amount of \$15 million for buying new habitat and rehabilitating existing habitat; compulsory acquisition powers for koala habitat outside the urban footprint; new planning laws for councils to minimise koala impacts when assessing development applications in key koala areas; new controls for councils to ban dogs in new developments in koala habitat; and new planning laws to allow land swaps in and outside the urban footprint for strategic koala habitat corridors. I also note that this state government is making \$400,000 in state funding available to researchers to study chlamydia and other serious koala diseases. It is hoped that this funded research will help find ways to reduce the impact of disease on koala populations in Queensland.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognise the hard work of the Moreton Bay Koala Rescue group. I commend the group's volunteers for their selfless and dedicated service to the protection and care of koalas in the Morayfield state electorate. When it comes to the protection of koala populations, governments can do something or nothing. In this instance, this state Labor government is doing something. In this instance, this state Labor government is working hard to provide the greatest protection of koalas ever seen in South East Queensland. It is this Labor government which is leading policy development on environmental protection in Queensland.

CRIMINAL CODE (SERIOUS ASSAULTS ON POLICE AND PARTICULAR OTHER PERSONS) AMENDMENT BILL

First Reading

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (11.55 am): I present a bill for an act to amend the Criminal Code to provide for minimum sentencing for serious assaults on police officers and particular other persons. I present the explanatory notes, and I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Question put—That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Tabled paper: Criminal Code (Serious Assaults on Police and Particular Other Persons) Amendment Bill.

Tabled paper: Criminal Code (Serious Assaults on Police and Particular Other Persons) Amendment Bill, explanatory notes.

Second Reading

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (11.56 am): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

Today I introduce a bill into parliament that seeks to provide further protection to our state's police and a bill that will hold violent thugs who seriously assault police accountable for their actions. When it comes to violent assaults against our state's police and emergency services workers, the time for making excuses for criminals must stop and the laws need to be strengthened to ensure that real deterrence is implemented.

The bill I present seeks to establish a minimum sentence range for offenders found guilty of seriously assaulting police, ambulance and fire officers where the assault involves biting, spitting or throwing bodily fluid or faeces at an officer in the course of their duties. In the case of assaults against police, this type of serious assault is much more than just resisting arrest. The types of serious assault I have outlined involve some form of decision to act out the assault and can have serious physical and emotional effects on the victim. The agony and anguish that a police officer or emergency services worker must go through waiting months for results of testing to find out if they have been exposed to a communicable disease is a harrowing experience. This ongoing suffering is not just isolated to the officer but also involves his or her family.

In 2007 there were 429 offenders convicted of serious assaults against police officers. This bill seeks to introduce a minimum sentencing range for serious assaults on police where the assault involves biting, spitting or throwing bodily fluid or faeces. In view of the time, I seek leave for the remainder of my speech to be incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Between December 2008 and June 2009 police officers made 155 WorkCover claims for assaults against them and in almost half those cases (72) the officer was exposed to blood or bodily fluid.

The Bill makes it clear that the minimum sentence that a court may impose on an offender who is guilty of a serious assault under a new part 2B, that defines certain types of serious assaults, is 3 months imprisonment. Offenders convicted for a serious assault on a police officer or emergency services worker, where the assault involves actual biting, spitting on, throwing bodily fluid or faeces at an officer fall within the new sentencing provisions contained in 2C. The new part 340(2D) makes it clear that the minimum 3 month term may not be suspended.

Assaults against our emergency services workers are as equally deplorable and this is why the LNP has sought to include them in this legislation.

Figures indicate in the financial year 2007-2008, 38 assault incidents were reported by QAS officers, 1 of which was reported to the Queensland Police Service (QPS) and 1 incident resulted in a paramedic being unable to commence their next shift.

In the financial year 2008-2009, 107 assault incidents were reported by QAS officers, 11 of which were reported to QPS and 7 resulted in a paramedic being unable to commence their next shift.

In the financial year 2009-2010 (YTD as of 19.8.09) 21 assault incidents were reported by QAS officers, 5 of which were reported to the QPS and none have resulted in a paramedic being unable to commence their next shift.

Any assault against a police officer or emergency services officers is one too many and we on this side of the House are determined to ensure that the penalty reflects the seriousness of the crime when it comes to these vicious attacks. If we do not respect and move to protect those at the front line who are there just to protect us, what hope is there?

The Bill allows a court to take into account exceptional circumstances where the offender is a child as to whether the minimum 3 months imprisonment is to be imposed.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Hinchliffe, adjourned.

~~PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS~~

~~Queensland Institute of Medical Research Centre~~

~~Ms GRACE~~ (Brisbane Central—ALP) (11.58 am): Well, if you were Chuck Feeney of Atlantic Philanthropies and you wanted to invest in world class scientific and medical research, where would you go? Brisbane, Queensland, is the answer. It was wonderful to be with Premier Anna Bligh as the first sod was turned on a new addition to Queensland's medical research and development capabilities. This