



Speech by

HOWARD HOBBS

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

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SELECT COMMITTEE ON TRAVELSAFE

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (10.26 a.m.): It is a pleasure to speak today in support of the Travelsafe Committee's Report No. 27, Unlicensed, Unregistered and on the Road. I am sure the majority of people in Queensland will support the committee's recommendations to tackle unlicensed driving and unregistered vehicles on the road. Queenslanders in electorates such as mine know only too well of the risks they face every day driving on our rural road network. It was no surprise to me to learn from another of the committee's inquiries that rural drivers are at least twice as likely to die in road accidents as city drivers. I am very pleased that the committee is inquiring into rural road safety and look forward to speaking in support of its recommendations from that inquiry in the future.

People on the land will be particularly interested in the committee's recommendations concerning compulsory carriage of licence requirements. The committee recommends that all drivers be required to carry their licences with them when they drive. It also recommends exemptions to this requirement for primary producers and emergency services workers in certain circumstances. For primary producers, the exemption recommended by the committee would apply to any driving farmers do during the course of their primary production activities. For example, farmers driving from paddock to paddock on a public road, or riding on farm bikes or working livestock along a highway should not be turned into criminals just because they cannot produce a driver's licence on demand to police for inspection at any time.

Anyone who has worked on the land and driven a tractor, farm bike or ute from paddock to paddock will know how difficult it can be to keep drivers' licenses or other paperwork in their pocket or vehicle at all times while they work. The committee's recommendations acknowledge the difficulties rural workers in these circumstances may face complying with this requirement. I trust that the Honourable the Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads will clearly understand the importance of this exemption when examining our recommendations.

I would also like to discuss the committee's work on unregistered vehicles. As the member for Bundaberg stated, the cost to Queensland due to people who do not pay registration fees could be \$90m annually. Members will hopefully remember this the next time the Government seeks to raise motor vehicle registration fees. It is time that everyone who uses the road pays their way.

The committee's report notes that at least some of the unregistered vehicle problem is due to the Minister's own department responsible for vehicle registration. Of 100,000 vehicles deregistered by Queensland Transport each year, the committee was told that 50,000 numberplates are never recovered from the vehicles. The department deregisters these vehicles after payments of the registration fees are more than 60 days overdue. Members can appreciate how difficult it is for police or Transport inspectors to detect unregistered vehicles on the road that are still fitted with numberplates. The Minister needs to expedite a resolution to this unsatisfactory situation.

Finally, I join the member for Bundaberg in thanking the people who assisted the committee during the inquiry. I also acknowledge the efforts of the other members of the committee—the members for Toowoomba North, Chermerside, Gympie and Mundingburra—and the parliamentary staff. I commend this report to the House.