



Speech by

Mrs D. PRATT

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

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POLICE POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AND ANOTHER ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (10.17 p.m.): I rise to support the Police Powers and Responsibilities and Another Act Amendment Bill 2002. This bill addresses the problem of hooning. Although it is recognised that the greater problem of vehicles being around a set of predetermined points may be greater on the coastal strips, I would like to inform the House that this activity, commonly called lapping, does occur in the broader community, even in quiet country towns. It has been brought to my attention and to the attention of my office a few times and every time I have passed this information on to the police it has been rectified in a very short space of time.

This problem has been around for a long time. I remember it in my youth. It actually was something that we wanted to do—get in the car and be seen with the local hoon. At the time it was a big deal.

Ms Bligh: Dolly the hoon.

Mrs PRATT: Absolutely. We all have a wild streak at some time in our lives. Unfortunately, the lack of free activities and the ongoing restrictions placed on what young people can do has intensified the attraction of hooning to more and more of our young population. As a young person in my teenage years, I could do many things in the country that kids cannot do now, including just going down to the river and going fishing. Now people have to have a licence. I used to be able to drive up the back paddock and it did not affect anybody.

Mr McGrady interjected.

Mrs PRATT: Pardon?

Mr McGrady: Carry on. You're up the back paddock.

Mrs PRATT: It is nice to revisit one's childhood occasionally. That did not affect anyone. We were up the back paddock. Mum and dad never worried about us too much. In fact I remember when my brother was 13 my parents bought us an old Austin. In those days, being one of the boys, we used to strip down this old Austin until eventually we got it down to a point where there was absolutely no body to it—just a motor, a steering wheel and a tin of petrol for the petrol tank. It was quite a dangerous thing to do. But I must admit that we all survived. Of course, we did not tell mum about half the things we did and hopefully she will not be listening to this or reading this in years to come. In those days, we thought that a hoon was a bit of a hero and possibly people still do today. The ones who could do the fastest laps, and what not, were very much the Fonzie type in our time. However, they were few and far between.

One of the members mentioned trail bike riding. We also did that, but in those days we were able to go through the state forest, so we were well out of harm's way. If someone fell off and broke an arm, we just picked them up, took them home and fixed them up. We did not take it so far. Sometimes I wonder if slowly but surely we are basically legislating away childhood. In many ways, we are becoming very intolerant. When I hear that people who ride trail bikes around yards are offending their neighbours because of the noise, I wonder if we are not legislating away their childhood and I wonder what our kids will be doing in a few years time.

There have been complaints in my area, mainly from elderly people. We do not get much of the lapping, but we do get dragging down the streets and it goes on and on until a few lights come on around the street and then they disappear for a while. The police have always been quick to act and clear them out. Although we are assured that it will stop in that area for a while, they pop up in another backstreet or on a quiet country road until they are moved on again.

From all reports, coastal areas suffer the greatest impact of this activity, including the blaring of stereos. Quite frankly, the constant blaring of music can destroy the harmony for people who wish to enjoy their own backyards or who are seeking peace and quiet in their retirement. We have had noise pollution laws for a long time and it surprises me that this form of noise pollution has not previously been addressed. I have wondered why that is the case. I have concerns about how the level of noise is judged and whether or not that is done purely on the investigating officer's judgment. I believe that a person's ability to cope with loud music can perhaps be attributed to the stress level of a person or their age. For example, when I am in a good mood—which is most of the time—a person driving past my house could probably hear the music blaring. The whole neighbourhood would not need to turn their stereos on.

Mr McGrady: What type of music do you play?

Mrs PRATT: Anything and everything, as long as it suits my particular mood. It could be blues, it could be jazz, it could be Beethoven—it could be anything. It depends on my mood. Then again, if my mood does not suit the music that someone else is playing, I am very intolerant. Someone's tolerance level to volume and types of music is a personal thing. Actually, when I leave this parliament on a Friday you probably could hear my music in the car going home with the airconditioner on.

Mr Pearce: You will be getting booked.

Mrs PRATT: I will have to watch that in the future because I really do not want my car impounded. It is not an excuse, but I am usually deaf from being in here by the time I get into my car.

Mr McGrady: We won't impound your car, just your record player. Is that what you call it?

Mrs PRATT: CD player. My CD player can blare out as much music as anybody else's and just as loudly. However, I will keep that in mind because it is easy to get wrapped up in your own little world when you are travelling along in a car, especially on quiet country roads. Besides, some music just has to be played loudly. I relate to a lot of young people in that respect. You just have to have that beat booming really loudly.

I do have concerns about instances where a child may borrow a family car and subsequently have it impounded. It concerns me that a family may be penalised to the point where jobs may be jeopardised in some particular way. I ask whether consideration has been given to that scenario.

There is no doubt that dangerous driving is occurring and that it has to be addressed. If only one life is saved by this legislation, then it is well worth while. Most of the hoons forget that there are many others on the roads and that they are not racetracks. Many young people believe that their car has to be souped-up, as we used to call it. I do not know what the current term is, but we used to call it souped-up. These cars are fairly high powered—or they try to make them that way. They like to make that muffler rumble. However, they have no real experience in how to handle it and vehicles become lethal instruments on our roads.

It is not necessarily the particular driver who may be hurt, but there are so many innocent parties who could be side-swiped or suffer the consequences of their 'fun'. Road fatalities are everyone's concern, but the horrific injuries inflicted can be traumatic to not only the person but also their families. I am aware of a young lady who is profoundly handicapped as a result of a car accident and whose mother, father and sister will be caring for her for the rest of her life. It is a terribly, terribly sad thing. Unfortunately, younger members of our community do not consider the long-term consequences of their actions. It is up to us to guide them through this dangerous part of their life—and it is dangerous. I admit that I went through it and that the things we did were dangerous. Luckily, we survived—by the grace of God, I guess. Many members have asked many questions and I will be interested in some of the minister's answers. On that note, I commend the bill to the House.
