



Speech by

Miss FIONA SIMPSON

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

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TRANSPORT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (3.34 p.m.): The Transport Legislation Amendment Bill contains some very good provisions. One that I wish to comment on is that for pollution insurance for vessels defined under the Transport Operations (Marine Pollution) Act 1995. This is the right way to go. This is a provision that needs to be applied in other legislation. It is one thing to have legislation that applies fines for pollution against an offender. However, if that polluter does not have any assets, there are no means to collect that fine from them. Having a form of insurance provides a comeback for the people of Queensland so far as ensuring that they are not left with the price tag for a clean-up. I support that process.

Pollution has been an issue in Narangba, where an irradiation plant is proposed. I raised the issue of public liability insurance to cover radiation accidents with the Health Minister. In her reply to me of 22 March she stated that people may take out insurance but that it was not mandatory under the act and that the court may order people to pay up. But the problem is that if companies have no assets or are a \$1 company, there are no means of getting compensation for cleaning up any pollution or dealing with its impacts. That is a very significant point. We need to see compulsory insurance for significant potential polluters when they are licensed by government, especially for the irradiation plant. The community has a lot of legitimate concerns about that, and this is one aspect of it.

In relation to waterways, we speak a lot about road and public transport systems because they are so important. One area that needs a lot more attention is our waterways, places that recreational and commercial vessels use heavily. Based on the figures I have heard, by the year 2015 in south-east Queensland we will see a doubling in the number of registered watercraft. That is a significant growth. We need appropriate laws to prevent people from polluting and laws to deal with vessel traffic, vessels breaking moorings, how to tow such vessels and ensuring that the people responsible for doing so have adequate powers under the act. All of these things are relevant to the type of legislation that we need to see before the House. Some of those aspects, particularly vessel sewage, are dealt with in this legislation.

If we are going to see a near doubling in the number of watercraft in south-east Queensland by about 2015, we will also need to see a lot more resources to implement and enforce this legislation. As my colleague the member for Gregory has already mentioned, we welcome many aspects of this legislation, but we want to ensure that the resources are put in place to oversee it. There is already legislation on the books that a lot of local communities have criticised because of its lack of policing, monitoring and enforcement. In respect of people living on boats on the Mooloolah River, there has been considerable criticism that there are insufficient officers to enforce existing legislation which bans people living aboard boats, except where people have moored under certain circumstances, such as for repairs. Once again, if we are going to see such a significant increase in the number of watercraft throughout Queensland, and particularly given the pressure on our waterways in south-east Queensland, we need to have adequate numbers of officers to enforce the existing, let alone any new, legislation.

I understand that between Bribie Island and Peregrine there are over 9,000 registered watercraft. There are also a number of other vessels that do not have to be registered or are registered outside those areas or interstate. In the area from Caboolture to Noosa, over 18,000 watercraft are registered. That is a lot of pressure on those waterways. With the growth that is occurring, one would think a reasonable number of officers would be provided for under the legislation to enforce the laws.

But the officers who enforce those laws are primarily boating and fisheries officers under the Department of Primary Industries.

Currently there are three officers—but only two of those positions are filled—provided for to enforce the legislation governing boating and fishing between Bribie Island and Peregian. That is simply not enough. Those officers deal with the existing legislation. We cannot have two people trying to enforce the existing legislation to prevent people living aboard boats, to prevent people dumping their pollution and to ensure that people are abiding by the regulations. There are only two officers between Bribie Island and Peregian for over 9,000 registered vessels in that area. In reality, many, many more vessels from outside those areas are using those waterways. To have two or potentially three officers covering that area for 24 hours a day, seven days a week is not realistic.

On paper, some will say that there are supposed to be six officers, but they deal with other fisheries issues. The scallop industry also contributes to fisheries issues. The two officers who are supposed to be enforcing the transport legislation also have other tasks in enforcing boating and fisheries legislation, ensuring that the growing port area of Mooloolaba is being looked after in terms of fisheries issues. I bring this issue before the minister. We support many aspects of this legislation, but it will be ineffective unless there are the officers to enforce it. We must have people on the water who are available not only in office hours but also after hours—available seven days a week—to enforce this legislation.

The people of Queensland, particularly those living on waterways, are very sensitive about environmental issues. They see from their doorsteps people who are doing the wrong thing. They want to know that they can report incidents and see their complaints followed through. The Mooloolah Harbour has come within my electorate only in the last 12 months due to the electoral boundary changes. I was aware of the live-aboard issues that existed in the Mooloolah River. I have found that those issues continue to be a major concern to the community.

Recently I held a public meeting to deal with some of the mooring issues in the Mooloolah River. The Queensland Transport officers who came along were excellent. There was also a boating and fisheries officer in attendance. The main issue at that meeting was to try to tidy up the moorings on the river and find an appropriate method to have them allocated in a fair manner. We also wanted to deal with the fact that the proposed moorings did not provide good access for people from outside the immediate area. The message that came through clearly from that meeting—which involved 115 members of the public from just a small part of Mooloolaba—was that locals are sick and tired of seeing people abuse our waterways by living aboard boats or throwing their pollution overboard into the Mooloolah River. This issue resonates through many other areas of Queensland. The average Queenslanders want to see their waterways looked after, not only from an amenity point of view but also in terms of the ongoing environmental concerns regarding their sustainable use. We do not want to see them polluted by those who access them with commercial or recreational craft.

The issue as to sewage from boats in the Mooloolah River needs to be addressed, but the live-aboard issue also needs to be addressed through greater monitoring. There is also the matter of boats that are abandoned and need to be towed away to safe areas. As well, if boats break moorings, there must be sufficient powers to deal with them in a timely way. There have been problems with that previously. I bring this issue before the minister. I know that there are problems with the legislation being passed under his portfolio but its administration falling to a totally different department. The community is crying out for resources to be allocated to the enforcement of this legislation. If that does not occur, the community will be very sceptical about the planning and consultation that is undertaken regarding the type of legislation we want. Unless we have officers to enforce it, it will not wash with people. I put that issue before the minister and ask for his consideration. Two officers—and potentially three—between Bribie Island and Peregian to look after those waterways are simply not sufficient.