



Speech by

Miss FIONA SIMPSON

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

Hansard 31 July 2002

TRANSPORT (COMPULSORY BAC TESTING) AMENDMENT BILL

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (8.36 p.m.): I rise in support of the Transport (Compulsory BAC Testing) Amendment Bill, introduced by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and shadow Minister for Transport and Main Roads, the member for Gregory. The opposition has had to show leadership on this important road safety issue because the government did not.

The genesis of this legislation is found in the very good work undertaken by one of the more effective committees of this place. I refer to the Travelsafe Committee. During its inquiry into the road toll in 1996 the issue of compulsory BAC testing was raised. Following an exhaustive investigation into this issue the committee unanimously recommended the introduction of compulsory blood testing of road accident victims. In March 1997 the member for Gregory, then the Minister for Transport and Main Roads, indicated support for these recommendations. However, when the Beattie Labor government came to office its response was totally different. Despite the fact that high-profile members of the Labor Party had been on the committee and had unanimously supported the recommendations of the committee, the newly appointed ministers for Police and for Transport and Main Roads advised the Clerk of the Parliament that it was all too hard and would cost too much. I, like many others, will be watching the one remaining member of the 1997 committee, who is keen to demonstrate his lack of knowledge of most topics before this House and will be able to plumb the depths of his hypocrisy here tonight.

It is said that compulsory blood testing would cost too much. Why would the Beattie government spend taxpayers' funds on saving lives when there are footbridges to be built? Why would the Beattie government spend money on improving the chemical laboratory when it is easier to let killers go free and spend the money on football stadiums? The opposition would not accept the do-nothing approach of the Beattie government and decided to explore how the recommendations of the Travelsafe Committee could be implemented.

By far the most important reason for the introduction of this legislation is to address the situation that exists under the present legislation whereby a person may be unconscious or feign unconsciousness to avoid being able to give consent to a blood sample being taken. It is four years since this loophole was explored by the Travelsafe Committee and for four years this government has seen fit to allow drink-drivers who have killed innocent road users to go free.

It has been only since the member for Gregory introduced this bill that the Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads has suddenly been able to get together the thousands of public servants at his command to address this loophole through legislation. As we have come to expect from this government, the bill prepared by the minister falls well short of the recommendations of the Travelsafe Committee and of the bill that we are now addressing.

It is important that the members opposite understand that Queensland is the only state in the Commonwealth that does not test unconscious road accident victims. In examining the position in other states, the opposition has found that the New South Wales government is operating a successful compulsory blood testing model. This bill is modelled on that legislation. So we do not want any humbug about this legislation not being practical or not being affordable. The members opposite can go and tell that story to Bob Carr.

This legislation is not just about making sure that drink-drivers get their just desserts; it is about deterrence; it is about closing a loophole so that any doubt that may exist in some people's minds that they can escape the consequence of their actions is gone. I support the bill and congratulate the shadow minister on having the dedication to reduce the road toll that the government opposite lacks.