



Speech by

**CARRYN SULLIVAN**

**MEMBER FOR PUMICESTONE**



Hansard 25 November 2003

**POLICE POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN** (Pumicestone—ALP) (5.32 p.m.): This bill addresses quite a number of significant legislative amendments. I would like to concentrate on three of the changes, firstly, the changes to the Weapons Act. The amendment will require the licensing of crossbows, shanghais and swords and will clarify licensing conditions on weapons. This one particularly affects some local issues. I was actually surprised by the number of phone calls and letters I received on just how many people the changes to the Weapons Act would actually affect.

In my electorate of Pumicestone each year there is a world-class and very famous Abbey Medieval Tournament. It is the single largest medieval festival in Australia covering 1,000 years of English European history from 600 AD to 1600 AD and attracts over 12,000 visitors from interstate and overseas. I was contacted by the director of the Abbey Museum, Mr Michael Strong. Both the staff and a team of dedicated volunteers run this highly successful and well-respected medieval tournament in the grounds of St Michael's College. He was deeply concerned that the changes to the Weapons Act would affect the tournament.

I immediately wrote to the minister, the Hon. Tony McGrady, who quickly confirmed that the Abbey Medieval Tournament festival would not be affected. The minister is very aware that there are a number of community organisations and people who display swords or use swords for ceremonial and historical re-enactments. The proposed amendments will in no way disrupt those legitimate activities involving swords such as marshal arts events and training, ceremonies, military re-enactments and theatre productions.

With regard to crossbows, in common with any other weapon, they will now have to be registered to an appropriate person. This will allow the use of crossbows in public by those groups who compete in a sporting event involving the use of crossbows. These weapons are lethal, as has been shown by a number of serious incidents from 1997 to as recently as April 2003. Hopefully, these changes to the Weapons Act will go a long way towards further protecting the community that we live in.

Secondly, I would like to make a brief reference to road hooning. We are all aware that it still exists and it is a difficult activity to stamp out. It has been confirmed on a number of occasions that hoons now work together and have spotters who place themselves in a position to be able to see police cars approaching and alert their hooning mates so they can disappear before the police arrive. This makes an apprehension difficult. However, the Beattie government has put in place a number of changes to the act that has toughened the laws and made a very unpleasant outcome for those hoons who reoffend. Eight hundred cars have been confiscated and only a few drivers have been recidivist offenders. This is the good news. Hopefully, the message is getting out that this government will not tolerate hoon offences.

There is a small minority who are flouting the law and these new changes will close an unintentional loophole. As the law stands now, a person who commits a string of hooning offences can have the hearing and determination of that offence adjourned by a court for a certain time. This is normal practice to permit for legal advice to be sought and a defence prepared. While a finding of guilty is made on a prior offence, every subsequent offence has to be dealt with as a first offence in terms of vehicle impoundment. So the risk of a three-month impoundment or forfeiture of vehicle can be avoided. However, in future an application for a three-month impoundment or vehicle forfeiture may be

made to a court irrespective of relevant previous offences not being heard and determined by that court. Therefore, under the new legislation, pleading guilty to a second offence before pleading guilty to the first offence will make no difference whatsoever to an application for a three-month impoundment.

I would like to concentrate my final remarks on the growing concern in the community about chroming, particularly since it has been brought to my attention not only as the local state member but also as the honorary president of a local drug awareness team. The Drug Caboolture Drug Awareness Team Incorporated is a drug awareness and prevention program servicing mainly the primary schools in the electorate of Pumicestone and Glass House.

**Ms Nelson-Carr:** You're a very hardworking member.

**Government members:** Hear, hear!

**Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN:** I take all of those interjections. I thank members very much. I class myself as being very fortunate to be able to be the honorary president and for some 13-odd years now.

I also take this opportunity to thank the member for Glass House, Carolyn Male, who has been very instrumental in helping us run the program through the local schools. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank those schools and the local service clubs, including Lions, Rotary, Crest, Apex and Lioness clubs and also the Neighbourhood Watches for their continued support of the program.

I have been approached by a number of schools to discuss the issue of children misusing volatile substances. It is well known that it is possible to get high on sniffing material such as glue, paint or petrol. Unfortunately, these substances are very easily accessible and also are very cheap. The medical consequences, as we have already heard from other speakers, are very disturbing. We are trying at least to address the issue head-on. It is impossible to legislate to ban the products that are used for sniffing, particularly the ones that I have already mentioned. As honourable members would know, when we ban one substance there is always a substitute. I have heard of a number of other substances that have been used for sniffing. I imagine that, people being people, they will often experiment with other substances to try to get that cheap high.

The changes that form part of this bill do not create a criminal offence for misusing a volatile substance; rather, they allow police to take quick and decisive action in the interests of the person affected by that volatile substance. As the act stands now, police officers can seize only inhalants which are visible to them and which they reasonably suspect the person is inhaling or about to inhale. They currently do not have the power to take anyone who is intoxicated by inhalants to a safe place like a hospital for treatment or care. There are also no restrictions on the sale of inhalants in this state.

Amendments will provide police officers with new research, seizure and detention powers in relation to people who misuse volatile substances. Also, the government is committed to working with retailers to support the responsible sale and supply of these volatile substances that can be inhaled, for example, paint, or ingested, for example, methylated spirits. New legislation will help to limit inappropriate access to these volatile substances.

When the proposed changes take effect in the new year, retailers in certain circumstances will be able to refuse to sell volatile substances without fear of being found guilty of unlawful discrimination. But it will be their responsibility to inform and train staff of the new changes. I want to place on record my thanks to the Minister for Police, the Hon. Tony McGrady, for highlighting the problem of chroming and attempting to do something about curbing the misuse of volatile substances in the community. My thanks also go to those people who were involved in the Queensland government's *Let's can chroming*, which is working with retailers to prevent volatile substance abuse. It is a very informative document and I have already received some good comments from the neighbourhood watches that I sent copies out to. I plan to send out some more copies to those businesses that may be interested. We all must continue the fight to overcome this damning and very damaging problem and make sure that our children have the very best possible chance to become adults and lead a productive life.

In closing, I would like to pay tribute to the police officers in my electorate who have helped to produce significant drops in percentages of certain crimes in the electorate of Pumicestone. I take this opportunity to welcome Sergeant Darren Tucker, who is the newly appointed officer in charge of the Bribie Island Police Station, and plain clothes detectives Tony Green and Mark Corry, who will be welcome assets to the existing police staff, particularly Shane Rockley, who has been done an admirable job role in his job as acting officer in charge. Also, I give a special thanks to Constable Paul Graymore, who is relieving at the Beachmere police beat. I congratulate him on his efforts and thank the Beattie government once again for placing a permanent police presence at Beachmere for the very first time.

The 2002-03 state Police Service annual statistical review shows that the Beattie government's investment in record police numbers and other law and order initiatives is paying off. The results in my area show a decrease in break and enters, motor vehicle theft, fraud, arson and liquor offences. Drug offences remain a problem—up by six per cent—but that may be attributed to a more concerted effort

in targeting by police leading to improved detection rates. I look forward to working with the police and the community to continue to see those figures drop for the benefit of the everyone. I commend the bill to the House.