



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

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POLICE POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AMENDMENT BILLS

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (5.51 pm): I rise to speak in favour of the two bills we are debating in the cognate debate today. Empowering the police to deal with hoons using trail bikes is a move that I know will share support from this side of the House. I share the view that we must give police every opportunity to bring peace and quiet to our communities by ensuring those intent on disturbing the peace for selfish reasons are prevented from doing so.

The laws brought in by the previous police minister with regard to confiscation of motor vehicles were certainly welcomed on the Gold Coast. It is only fair that they be applied to trail bike riders as well. I have mentioned before in this place that the Surfers Paradise Community Consultative Committee, with which I have had dealings for five years, has always raised car drivers hooning through Surfers Paradise as its single biggest issue. The laws that apply to motor vehicles certainly can be applied to trail bike riders as well.

The provisions for punishment in relation to the misuse of noisy trail motorbikes give a fair go for those who may misunderstand or make a mistake in terms of where they choose to use their motorbike. At the same time, though, the laws are still harsh enough to ensure that those repeat offenders who prove themselves to be nothing but public nuisances will be dealt with accordingly.

I am also very much in favour of the provisions which will see offenders who forfeit their vehicles fined if they try to remove expensive accessories which had been added to the car before handing it over to police. I understand that this provision may have come from a well-publicised incident in which a young driver basically turned his car into a shell of what it had been prior to confiscation because he had some time to strip it. No-one thought he would do that to something that he loved. He just decided to do it to frustrate the police and the authorities, and he did so. I certainly welcome this provision.

I appreciate the commonsense inherent in forcing those who have had their cars impounded to pick them up during business hours rather than picking them up according to the time line that applied to the fine. The fact of the matter is that those hoons who cause enough of a public nuisance that they have had their cars impounded should have to adhere to business hours when picking up their vehicles. These offenders should live their lives around the enforcement of laws in this state rather than the impound yard or police force adjusting to the time of day that that person's vehicle was impounded. Once again, it seems that there must have been occasions when people have said, 'I will apply the very letter of the law. You have applied it to me. You have impounded it at 10 o'clock or 11 o'clock at night. So I have the right and I want to enforce that right to pick it up now.' I am glad that some realistic provisions have been put in there, too.

The other bill we are debating in this cognate debate is the bill providing police with more power to use drug detection dogs. I must admit that when I first heard of this I wondered how practicable it would be to apply it to nightclubs. Having seen this, I am very much in favour of the legislation as I believe it will make young Queenslanders less vulnerable to attacks from people under the influence of drugs. It will also hopefully mean that more of the drugs that permeate our nightclub culture here in Queensland will be detected by the police before they are ingested by patrons. This bill will not only bring benefits in terms of

less drug related violence; it will also bring potential health benefits in that it will hopefully bring down drug usage in our nightspots and will mean that nightclub patrons will not be using illicit drugs and consuming alcohol at the same time.

The fact that under the bill handlers of drug detection dogs will be given more discretion as to where they deploy their dogs without requiring a warrant will now put more onus for making important decisions on the drug detection dog handlers and allow the experts to make the decisions in the field.

My one major concern with this bill is the reaction that seeing drug detection dogs could cause for some nightclub patrons, in particular tourists. In my electorate of Surfers Paradise there is a very large nightclub precinct which has no equal in this state. With the number of foreign and domestic tourists who visit Surfers Paradise increasing by the year, it is important that we do not give the impression to tourists that we have great illicit drug problems in Surfers Paradise because drug detection dogs are constantly roaming the streets.

I have a concern with the management of the dogs in these very crowded venues with inebriated patrons. Once again, we have seen that happen this week with schoolies week. When an incident occurs, everyone crowds around to look. I can just imagine in some of these very crowded nightclubs there would obviously be an issue when these dogs come in. Some patrons who are obviously under the influence of alcohol will behave like fools when the dogs enter. Hopefully we will be able to manage that.

Some people from other cultures are not as used to drug detection dogs as we are here, for example at our airports. While I support this bill, I ask that the minister give consideration to the negative outcomes that drug detection dogs could have if the policy of using them to make our nightclubs safer is not carefully implemented. I commend the bill to the House.