



Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR CHARTERS TOWERS

Hansard Wednesday, 23 March 2005

TRANSPORT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT REGULATION (NO. 3) 2004 - DISALLOWANCE OF STATUTORY INSTRUMENT

Mr KNUTH (Charters Towers—NPA) (8.31 pm): This is a big issue for Queensland. These new laws, which came into effect on 1 January this year, have upset and enraged many residents. Under these new laws, law-abiding citizens can be fined \$30 or more for leaving their car windows down slightly to prevent extreme heat temperatures in their vehicles. This is a ridiculous law that is contrary to commonsense. Leaving car windows down slightly is a practice that has been used for generations. To legislate and to fine people for using commonsense will prove that this government is out to rip off law-abiding citizens in order to fill its state Treasury coffers.

These new laws require the windows of parked vehicles to be closed fully. They do not take into account Queensland's hot climate and the impact that has on the elderly, the infirm and young children. Residents have complained to my office about popped or cracked car windows that were caused by them not being allowed to leave their car windows down to allow fresh air to circulate in their cars. Is the government going to compensate these people when their car windows pop out or crack because they are forced to have their car windows wound up? Residents, including the elderly and nursing mums, leave their car windows down to alleviate the build up of heat in their cars so that they are not scalded when they return to their cars.

It is the government's moral responsibility to have law enforcers chasing thieves rather than the person who leaves his car window down 30 millimetres. Police officers in rural Queensland do a wonderful job with limited resources. They would rather spend these resources on combating real crime. Why on earth does the government want police officers out on the streets ripping off law-abiding citizens who leave their car windows down 30 millimetres?

Within a two-week period in Charters Towers, thieves broke into several homes and community centres, including the police-citizens youth club, which is one of Charters Towers' most secure buildings. Thieves smashed through the front door, ransacked the canteen—stole food, drinks and cash—and smashed the emergency exit door and the organisation's bus. In January in Charters Towers there were at least 25 break-ins. Last Sunday night again youths were roaming the streets smashing windows, threatening the public and throwing rocks at passing cars. Those youths threatened staff and customers at a food outlet, waving sticks and stealing soft drinks.

Mr WALLACE: I rise to a point of order. The member is not addressing the motion.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The member is making a point about the use of police resources. I would not labour the point too much.

Mr KNUTH: The police would rather use their limited resources on apprehending people who are responsible for committing crimes rather than wasting those limited valuable resources patrolling the streets and fining residents for leaving their car windows down slightly.

Mr O'Brien: How many letters has your office received about this issue?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Cook will cease interjecting.

Mr KNUTH: What is the government's priority when it comes to law enforcement? To chase and apprehend law-breakers or to rip off law-abiding citizens? In the hot conditions of rural Queensland, it is impractical to ask people to leave their car windows wound up all the time. Leaving car windows down slightly or open slightly is plain commonsense. In these places you could fry an egg on the bonnet of these cars.

Two weeks ago I tabled a petition signed by over 600 people, whose signatures were collected in less than three weeks, objecting to the unfairness and the stupidity of these laws. That shows the passion behind the opposition to these laws.

As a matter of urgency, I request that the government scrap the enforcement of these laws. They are impractical and contrary to basic commonsense. This law is an impediment to our freedom and will hurt law-abiding citizens who are not speeding, drink-driving or parking illegally. Police efforts should be focused on deterring real crime and catching real criminals.