



Speech by

Barbara Stone

MEMBER FOR SPRINGWOOD

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TRANSPORT LEGISLATION AND ANOTHER ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Ms STONE (Springwood—ALP) (11.31 am): I rise in support of the Transport Legislation and Another Act Amendment Bill 2006. Firstly, I wish to speak about the proposed amendments to a number of transport related acts that will enable the Queensland Police Service to provide Queensland Transport with daily updates of any changes in criminal histories of individuals who hold particular authorities under legislation administered by Queensland Transport. The legislation to be amended is the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994, the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995, the Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Act 1994 and the Tow Truck Act 1973.

These acts list a number of criminal offences that have the potential to disqualify a person from holding a particular authority. The criminal offences range from the very serious—such as paedophilia, rape, murder and drug trafficking—through to the less serious but equally important offences such as assault and theft. Queensland Transport uses criminal history information to assess a person's suitability to hold an authority to be, for example, a public passenger transport operator or driver, a traffic controller, a driver trainer, a Q-Ride service provider, an approved inspection station proprietor or nominee, an approved examiner, a dangerous goods vehicle driver, a tow truck driver or operator, or a person approved to conduct training for the operation of ships or to conduct examinations in the operation of ships.

People with these authorities have been given certain rights to undertake responsible roles in the community. Quite justly, the community expects Queensland Transport to undertake a rigorous and ongoing screening process to ensure these people have not committed or do not commit a criminal offence that would make them unsuitable for the roles.

Currently these acts do not support the daily monitoring of criminal histories by the police. At present the police can only provide criminal history information about individuals if it is specifically requested by the department. This is usually done on application or renewal or every six months for passenger transport authorities. As a result, Queensland Transport may not be aware that a person has been charged with a disqualifying offence for up to six months or longer from when the offence is alleged to have occurred. In addition, Queensland Transport would not know what the nature of the offence was—for example, whether it was serious. Clearly this time frame is not acceptable as it could put members of the community at risk from an unsuitable person.

Importantly, when this proposed bill is passed these amendments will enable Queensland Transport to receive criminal history information from the Queensland Police Service on a daily basis. It is proposed that this will be done by electronic means, which will reduce the associated administration time for both Queensland Transport and the Queensland Police. Receiving daily updates about criminal history information will enable Queensland Transport to take prompt action to suspend or cancel the authority of a person who has been charged with a disqualifying offence. In turn, this action will provide the community with a further assurance that the people issued with these Queensland Transport authorities do not have a criminal history that makes them unsuitable to provide transport services.

This bill also contains significant amendments that have come about due to the Queensland Road Safety Summit held last year and due to extensive statewide consultation, including a Logan young drivers

forum which I was very happy to chair along with the minister for the environment. We now see the introduction of new rules in relation to the licensing and behaviour of young drivers. I do not need to stand here and remind members about the concerns of the community for our young drivers being killed on our roads. Too many times we read newspaper headlines or see horrific images on our news broadcasts of tragic road crashes that have claimed lives and wrecked families. It is not only the families that suffer. Our Emergency Services personnel are put into the situation of having to perform their duties under the most distressing circumstances. Police officers have spoken to me of the difficult job they have in informing a parent that they have lost their child due to a road crash. One can only imagine the impact this has on those officers. Also, we often forget about the doctors and nurses in the emergency departments who attend to the injured and their families and we forget about the witnesses who see these accidents. They are often first on the scene and get involved in helping those injured. A serious injury or fatal car crash has an impact far and wide and it comes with a cost that cannot be measured.

In respect to learner drivers, we will see the lowering of the learner licensing age to 16 with the additional requirement to record an additional 100 hours of supervised on-road driving experience. I welcome the introduction of a two-stage licensing system for provisional drivers. Some of the new licensing laws that this bill will introduced are the compulsory display of P-plates, peer passenger restrictions and high-powered vehicle restrictions for provisional drivers under the age of 25.

The amendments in this bill pertaining to young driver licensing certainly reflects the types of initiatives that parents told me they wanted to see implemented. I only hope that these new laws will not just have an impact but will have a significant impact on reducing our road toll. I congratulate the minister for tackling this emotional and extremely important issue and carrying through with the implementation of these new laws. I commend the bill to the House.