



Speech by

Barbara Stone

MEMBER FOR SPRINGWOOD

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ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AMENDMENT BILL

Ms STONE (Springwood—ALP) (12.20 pm): I rise to speak briefly in the debate on the Environmental Protection Amendment Bill 2007. This bill aims to reduce the amount of litter we see in our communities, particularly on our roadsides. A complaint I often receive from people in my community is about the amount of litter on our roadsides. I receive a lot of complaints from people in my electorate living on the boundaries of reserves. Unfortunately, people dump rubbish in these reserves. Residents who live on the boundaries of these reserves not only have to look at this unsightly litter but also have concerns about the fact that it is a fire hazard. I am very pleased that I will be able to inform residents who have faced this problem that this bill will provide the ability to issue a clean-up direction notice for the dumping of 20 litres or more of litter.

Another issue that has been raised with me on several occasions is that our roadsides look quite unsightly when covered with litter. Mr Rod Shaw from Rochedale South has contacted me several times about this issue. I am looking forward to sending him a copy of this bill.

According to the latest litter count figures issued by Keep Australia Beautiful in February 2007, 55 per cent of the volume of litter in Queensland is found along our roadsides. This is higher than the national average of 49 per cent. In New South Wales, where an authorised person has the ability to issue an infringement notice to the registered owner of a vehicle, the volume of litter found along the highways and roadsides is 40 per cent. In Victoria, where public reporting is also used to report littering offences from vehicles, this figure drops to 32 per cent. Given that, is it any wonder we have people noticing the problem that roadside littering is becoming. I hope that like interstate roadside litter our roadside litter will decrease. I hope this bill will achieve that goal for us and we will see less litter on our roadsides.

The changes will make enforcing littering offences in Queensland significantly easier and safer, particularly when litter is thrown from a vehicle. It will be similar to a camera detected speeding offence where the owner of the vehicle receives an infringement notice in the mail. It is certainly going to make it a lot easier to enforce penalties on litter bugs.

The bill will introduce two new littering offences and penalties. The first is depositing litter from a vehicle and the second is dangerous littering. Depositing litter from a vehicle has a maximum penalty of 30 penalty units or an infringement notice penalty of \$225. Dangerous littering has a maximum penalty of 40 penalty units or an infringement notice penalty of \$300. Dangerous littering may include throwing a lit cigarette onto dry grass during extreme fire danger conditions, smashing a bottle and leaving the broken glass on the footpath, leaving a hypodermic needle in a garden bed or near a children's playground or throwing an item from a car at another road user or pedestrian. It is quite a broad definition.

I particularly want to talk about the discarding of needles in public places. I have had a number of constituents come and see me because a family member or friend has been the victim of a needle stick injury. They have been at the local shopping centre or out in the evening visiting restaurants or hotels nearby. Unfortunately, one of their family members has endured a needle stick injury.

One was a needle stick injury in a car park. That family went through a lot of stress. On one occasion the victim was a five-year-old child. People go through a lot of stress waiting for months for health tests to be cleared. It is a horrible time for those families. I am very pleased to see that the maximum penalty for this offence is \$3,000. I really hope this penalty is applied with the full force of the law. I know how hard it is for a family to endure an incident like a needle stick injury in a public place.

I thank the former minister, Lindy Nelson-Carr, for dealing with this issue and bringing this legislation to the House. Littering has enormous environmental, social and financial costs attached to it. I want to take a moment to mention sporting grounds. I know a few young people who work part time cleaning major sport stadiums. This helps them with their uni costs. I am hoping that they will still be needed to clean up those sporting stadiums. I would hate to see them lose their jobs. I put that on the record.

I take this opportunity to thank all the schools in my electorate who educate our young people on keeping their school community litter free. They are doing more than that. They are teaching children about the environmental impact of litter. There really is a lot of good education happening in our schools with respect to the environmental impacts of litter. I congratulate our schools.

I also thank Col Myers, the coordinator of Clean Up Australia Day in the Springwood electorate, and all those who assisted in cleaning up the Springwood electorate this year. I assisted them at the Kimberley Park Community Centre at Shailer Park. I think most of us were very surprised at not only the amount of litter we found but also the type of litter we found. I look forward to assisting them at future clean-up days in my electorate.

I want to congratulate the new minister. I have not had the opportunity to do that yet. I congratulate him on his new role. I look forward to working with him on many issues as they come forward over the term. These new laws are fantastic. They send a strong message that littering is not going to be tolerated in Queensland. I commend the bill to the House.