



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

Hansard Wednesday, 21 February 2007

TRANSPORT LEGISLATION AND ANOTHER ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (3.09 pm): I rise to speak to the Transport Legislation and Another Act Amendment Bill 2006. I acknowledge the contribution by the shadow minister and offer my support for the bill currently before the House. The bill effects several changes which I wholly support and strongly believe will vastly improve road safety in Queensland.

The amendments as they stand will for the first time allow Queensland police to carry out random roadside drug testing for certain illicit substances as well as strengthening the requirements and restrictions for young drivers on our roads. I believe these changes are much needed in Queensland in order to reduce the number of road accidents, thus also reducing the number of deaths on our roads.

Firstly, I note that random drug driving tests have been a long time coming, with the parliamentary Travelsafe Committee having handed down its report *Drug driving in Queensland* in 1999. The reports of the Travelsafe Committee have been outstanding. I refer to an article in the *Courier-Mail* on Monday about our committee structure. The article implied that it was pretty worthless. I think the Travelsafe Committee under the chairmanship of the member for Fitzroy has done a great job. I have read a number of its reports over the years. I have been able to get reports for constituents who have expressed concern to me about driving matters. A particular family, who I will come back to later in my speech, wrote and made a submission to the minister and the Travelsafe Committee and were responded to. We can actually see that the effect of the reports of the committee over the years is reflected in the legislation. Other matters that the transport minister has initiated in terms of having a summit and actually getting things done—far more than in other states—are also reflected in this legislation and that is very commendable.

Many other committees do a great job. I am privileged to be on the Public Accounts Committee. It was chaired by the member for Greenslopes and is now chaired by the member for Kallangur. I can honestly say that when I came into this place I did not know much about public sector accounting and auditing. I have learnt something at every meeting that I have been to. We have a number of members who do not know a lot about public sector auditing and we are learning all the time.

Many of us come into this place and do not know everything about everything. One of the things we try to create is the illusion that we know many things about many things. Often we know that we need to learn. We learn about matters of state and governance in these committees. I think they do a great job. Again I commend the Travelsafe Committee. Many other members would agree that whilst everything can be improved, our committees—under their current structure—are certainly doing a great job.

This bill contains a number of amendments to the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000 which will enable our police officers to carry out a series of tests designed to detect drugged-out drivers. These amendments have been in operation in Victoria for a number of years, whilst other jurisdictions have more recently adopted similar legislation. Since Queensland police have taken a hard line on drink drivers, the inadvertent and unfortunate consequence of this is that the number of motorists driving under the influence of drugs is on the rise.

The attitudes of motorists towards drug driving is of serious concern. A study by car and insurance group AAMI surveyed young drivers aged between 18 and 24. The findings were disturbing, to say the

least, and strengthen the Queensland coalition's resolve to see these important amendments enacted. The Young Drivers Road Safety Index 2005 found that 13 per cent of young drivers believed that using recreational drugs before driving did not really affect their driving ability. It found that 16 per cent believed that drug driving was safer than drink driving and 22 per cent of young drivers, as well as 13 per cent of older drivers, admitted to driving after using recreational drugs. These figures are in line with other research.

As many other members in this debate have mentioned before me, as with alcohol the use of drugs can significantly impair a driver's skill and reflexes to the point where they can become a serious road hazard and a grave risk to the public. The Australian Medical Association of Queensland has also recognised this dangerous trend and applauds the Queensland parliament's bipartisan support of this bill. The AMAQ has suggested that the use of reliable technology that allows for the random testing of drivers for detection of illicit drugs will reduce the road toll. I unequivocally concur with that. I also support the organisation's position on increasing education of drivers on the perils and potential consequences of drug driving.

In its final report into drug driving in Queensland, the Travelsafe Committee recommended that drug-driving material be incorporated into driver training literature and licence testing procedures. The Queensland coalition believes that reducing the incidence of drug driving on Queensland roads requires a concerted campaign of education, legislation and regulation. As I have mentioned, several states have also recognised the danger of drug drivers and have enacted similar legislation to allow roadside testing for drugs.

These roadside tests are akin to random breath tests for alcohol. Testing drivers for drugs involves police officers taking a saliva sample for analysis for traces of illegal relevant drugs such as cannabis, methylamphetamine and MDMA, or ecstasy. Where a test returns positive police are able to carry out further blood or urine tests to confirm the result. I note that provision has been made in the regulations to allow for the testing to include other drugs once they are able to be detected.

To date the Victorian experience has been very successful in netting and prosecuting nearly 500 drug drivers. New South Wales police also recently commenced roadside drug testing with success. As the chamber has heard, research indicates that random drug testing appears to be a more effective deterrent against drug driving than increasing sanctions or simply educating drivers about the risks associated with drug driving.

Furthermore, an investigation by AAMI insurance group concluded that the vast majority of drivers—98 per cent—support random roadside drug testing. It is therefore imperative that the government acknowledge the wishes of the people of Queensland by ratifying this legislation but also by making sure that we dedicate sufficient resources so that this program has the best chance of success.

I am supportive of fixed speed cameras. We need to do something. There are so many areas where people speed. The minister told the member for Kawana that he will deal with the issue of siting these fixed speed cameras on local roads. That is obviously something that will have to be sorted out between state and local government. I think that fixed speed cameras are something we have to consider given that too many people see where the mobile cameras are and change their driving patterns accordingly. If a person speeds they have to cop the consequences if they get a ticket. The only way to stop people speeding is if they get enough demerit points and they lose their licence.

As the member for Surfers Paradise, the renowned party capital of Queensland, I am pleased that police will now have the necessary powers to catch these drug drivers and get them off our roads. The specialist South Eastern Region Traffic Branch, led by Inspector Paul Biggin, does a fantastic job catching drink drivers in the party precinct with regular RBT blockades in hot spot areas such as Surfers Paradise and Broadbeach. I have always wondered how many drivers fly under the radar, so to speak, because they register a zero blood alcohol level but are affected by drugs in a similar way to drivers with a very high concentration of alcohol.

These vital amendments to the Transport Legislation and Another Act Amendment Bill will ensure that these menaces are more likely to be caught, which will make our roads safer for the general public. I applaud the government for introducing the necessary changes. I also ask the minister for transport to reveal how drug testing operations will be funded—whether his department will foot the bill or whether it will come out of the Minister for Health's budget. In New South Wales random roadside drug testing is funded by the New South Wales Department of Health, as well as a defraying of costs by a \$2 increase in drivers licence fees. As the shadow health minister I would hope that, if these vital tests are to be added to the ledger of Queensland Health, the department's budget is correspondingly increased so that the cost of drug-testing operations does not negate spending in other vital areas of health.

Mr Lucas: It will be coming from the Police budget.

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the Minister. The second important change that this bill effects is toughening the restrictions on young drivers. Like other members, the member for Greenslopes has a

daughter who is becoming a learner driver. Every time I have the pleasure of driving my daughter to school or somewhere else she asks if she can drive. Now she is having a couple of lessons with a driver training school. It is not that I am impatient; I want her to learn to drive properly. I got my licence a long time ago. I do not want to instruct her in the wrong way.

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mr LANGBROEK: I like to think that I do drive properly, member for Gregory, but there may be times I might indicate things that may not be right. Last year the Queensland Road Safety Summit which I was pleased to attend recommended that a number of measures be introduced by parliament to ensure the safety of inexperienced drivers. In my electorate and the wider Gold Coast I have attended meetings and spoken with young drivers and their parents about what the government could do to reduce the number of children dying on our roads. I specifically recall the transport minister coming to the Holiday Inn and showing us a graph which revealed that young people have the lowest incidence of accidents when they have their learner's permit. That is replaced by the highest incidence of accidents when they have just received their licence. It was quite amazing. They have the highest likelihood of having an accident as soon as they get their licence, after having been so careful when they were learner drivers. It demonstrated that we had to do something about this.

As I mentioned before, some constituents have come to see me about the fact that their child died. They were Michael and Desley Robinson, the parents of Phillip Robinson who was killed in a motor vehicle accident on the M1 freeway on 7 September 2001. He was hit from behind by a young man in a Toyota Supra sports vehicle at such a speed that he was forced across the median strip of the freeway and into the oncoming traffic. It was an accident that devastated their family. They wrote submissions to the Travelsafe Committee and the transport minister, both of whom responded acknowledging their submission. Some of the things they said have come into this legislation.

I note what the member for Greenslopes said about people having to have the right attitude. With some of these changes to what provisional licensees will have to do—like restricting mobile loudspeaker functions for supervisors and passengers of learner drivers and for passengers of first-stage provisional licence holders under 25—we will be relying on people doing the right thing because it is very difficult to legislate for absolutely everything. When people are made aware of the things they are doing wrong or that are illegal, hopefully they will modify their behaviour. It will be very difficult to police some of those things that are in the car, and they could modify their behaviour once they are pulled over by the police. As I said, I think they are very good initiatives.

In November last year, a fatal accident by a P-plate driver tragically claimed the lives of three teenagers and critically injured a fourth near the Sunshine Coast. In 2005, four Townsville teenagers died in a single car accident when the 17-year-old driver collided with a tree.

Mr Lucas: I have been to the scene of that accident at Pallarenda in Townsville and it is like a shrine. It's very, very sad.

Mr LANGBROEK: I take that interjection. As we have heard from so many other members, it is just devastating for the rest of the cohort. It is shattering for their friends as well as family members, and it has devastating effects on communities. Any young driver being killed in an accident is tragic, but when there are multiple fatalities we have to look at what we are doing wrong from a legislative and executive position.

As I have mentioned before, as soon as a young adult gets their licence at 17, the likelihood of having an accident in the first few years of driving skyrockets. As the father of a learner driver, I am concerned about these statistics, which is why I applaud these amendments. The relevant amendments concerning the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995 will prescribe tougher rules on learner and provisional drivers in a bid to improve their road safety. Changes to the legislation—such as increasing driver training time, the compulsory display of L- and P-plates, and passenger restrictions—will make Queensland the toughest state in Australia in which to get a licence. As I am constantly reminding my own daughter, this is not because we want to prevent young people from obtaining a licence; rather, we want to save lives. Just as we have laws to protect our children from the excesses of youth, I believe this bill is a leap forward in increasing road safety and protecting young drivers against themselves. I commend the bill to the House.