



Speech by

Karen Struthers

MEMBER FOR ALGESTER

Hansard Tuesday, 20 February 2007

TRANSPORT LEGISLATION AND ANOTHER ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Ms STRUTHERS (Algeria—ALP) (7.39 pm): The public has called for urgent action to end the carnage that they hear of daily on our roads, particularly the tragic loss of young lives. This bill responds to that call with sweeping changes to give young people a wake-up call and it provides for the introduction of random roadside drug testing, fixed speed cameras and many other measures that will go a long way to improving road safety.

Some members in this House were young drivers in an era when the blokes—not many women drove—had a car with a bench seat. They had one arm on the steering wheel, the other around the girl bringing her in real close and—this is the tragic thing—many drove with a belly full of alcohol. It was the done thing. Thankfully, we have come a long way through the great efforts particularly through the Road Safety Division of the Department of Transport. Many years of good campaigns such as the drink-driving campaigns have all played their part. We have seen very positive changes in attitudes and behaviours. Sadly, we do not have cars with those bench seats any more.

The intensive campaigning of recent decades to limit drink driving coupled with strong laws and policing practices has had a very profound and positive effect on behaviour. Sadly, though, the public awareness campaigns, the strong laws and the shock advertising have not got through the heads of all young people. As we all know, 17- to 24-year-old males are the group most at risk of death in road crashes—more than any other drivers. There were 106 deaths attributed to young driver crashes last year in Queensland alone. The tragedy is that most of these accidents and deaths are entirely preventable.

I want to publicly thank community members who had their say on the serious issue of youth road safety at community forums I held last year in Forest Lake and Algeria last year. In particular, I thank the staff and students of Forest Lake State High School. These students were frank and thoughtful with their contributions. I am now pleased to report back to these local people that the Beattie government has taken on board many of their ideas and this bill will now give effect to many sweeping changes to minimise risk-taking behaviour of the thoughtless young drivers who put their lives and the lives of others at risk each time they switch on the ignition of their car.

The key changes include things like requiring learner drivers to record 100 hours of certified supervised on-road driving experience. I know the young people at the Forest Lake State High School were a bit worried about that, wondering who would sit in the car with them for 100 hours or who might pay for the driving lessons if they had to do it through a driving school. I think many of these issues have been taken on board. The way this system will be set up will mean that most young people should not have any problem recording those 100 hours of supervised driving.

The peer passenger restrictions are all very sensible measures as well as restricting all mobile phone use for young people. Those things are very practical, sensible measures and I am sure we are going to see the benefits of those once they are introduced.

I join other members in welcoming the introduction of random roadside drug testing. There has been a longstanding myth that driving under the influence of marijuana makes people more cautious drivers. Nothing could be further from the truth. Blood tests at the morgue have proven that drugs are very

prevalent in road accident victims and may, in fact, kill more people on the road than alcohol does. There are issues with roadside drug testing and people have questions about it. At a meeting I was at last night people raised issues with me about this scheme. Some people were asking: will the DNA samples be taken and retained? If so, for how long? And will they be protected? These are issues I will ask the minister to consider and report back on. People asked: how can drug levels in the blood be measured and what measurement is deemed excessive or dangerous? My understanding is that there will just simply be a positive or negative, not a level of drug in the blood. I note the minister has taken on board many of the issues people have raised through the feedback around the state. I am sure these issues and questions are ones he will respond to as well.

I know that the minister is also very determined to end the carnage on our roads. I commend his efforts. I know that as a father of young children and soon-to-be drivers he is particularly concerned and has done a lot in his time as transport and main roads minister to make road safety a top priority. I commend his departmental officers as well, who are so devoted and determined to make sure young lives are not ruined in the way they are currently. To Mike Stapleton, his colleagues and others involved in the road safety activities of the department I say: a job well done, although there is lots more to do. This bill contains a lot of great measures. I welcome them and look forward to seeing the positive results that should occur.