



Speech by

Karen Struthers

MEMBER FOR ALGESTER

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SECURITY PROVIDERS AMENDMENT BILL

Ms STRUTHERS (Algeria—ALP) (4.01 pm): The private security industry is a longstanding and necessary complement to our formal policing services. Security personnel can carry substantial responsibilities in crime prevention and law enforcement and therefore must be appropriately licensed and monitored.

I say well done to the minister, her staff and departmental officers for the extensive work that has been done in the consultation process and analysis leading to this bill. I also commend the comprehensive analysis of the issues set out in this bill in the Parliamentary Library research paper covering this bill. While I am putting the praise out there, let me also thank the security staff at Parliament House for their professional standards of work in keeping this precinct safe and, in doing that, keeping us all safe.

The Queensland government has been increasing police numbers throughout the state, but with just over twice the number of security personnel to police it is essential that we rein in the activities of this industry and let operators know that we are very serious about maintaining high standards for operators in the industry as it grows. Checks carried out by the Office of Fair Trading show that something like 30 per cent of operators were subject to further investigations and, in some cases, I understand legal action was taken against these operators. About 115 complaints were lodged against the industry last year. That may not seem like a large number but it is enough to indicate that there are rogue elements in this industry, as there are in any other industry. It is important that we remain vigilant in our monitoring, probity checks and other measures that are included within this bill.

I must admit that I was not fully aware of the size of the private security industry and the extent of the activities. I was also very surprised to see the growth in security personnel numbers in the past couple of years. Figures for 30 June 2006 indicate that there had been a 93 per cent growth on the figures for the previous year. There are something like 1,200 or so people listed as security officers around the state. The combined security officers and crowd controllers number close to 1,400. The number of security firms was about 892, there being a 68 per cent growth on the 2004-05 figures. We have about 541 private investigators around the state and that number seems to be growing as well.

I have had my own very disturbing experience with a security operator whose work involved leaving dogs in yards overnight. This fellow bred these Alsations and then left them in yards around Brisbane. I am pleased to see that these dog handlers will also be covered under this legislation. This fellow had access to weapons, most likely illegally, he had domestic violence orders against him and he was stalking my colleagues and I. This kind of sinister character should not be able to be within cooe of a responsible industry like security and he most definitely should not have had access to weapons. I ask the minister to ensure that she is confident that the provisions within this bill and its links to the Weapons Act are tough on the illegal and inappropriate access to and use of weapons by security personnel.

I support the expansion of the definition of security officer to also include a person who, for reward, watches another person's property or personally patrols a property and, as I said, the extension to people like this fellow who had the responsible position of handling and leaving dogs at yards. This fellow was wearing a uniform that displayed badges which looked very professional and was pretending to be

someone he was not. He was using his role to threaten and intimidate lots of other people, including me and my staff.

I support the measures that strengthen character and probity tests to weed out undesirable elements within the industry. I support continuing professional development through ongoing training. I also support the increase in the penalties for operating without a licence or for engaging unlicensed personnel. These are very sensible measures that are being included in the bill. It will go a long way to improving and cleaning up this industry. I wish the minister well in its implementation. I know that the security industry will be called upon more and more as our fears grow about terrorism. There will be more people needed to monitor and watch over infrastructure and to be at events providing crowd control and other support. It is a growing industry. It is very, very important that it is a well-monitored industry. I congratulate the minister on this bill. Let us make sure that we keep this industry on a very tight rein.