



Speech by

Hon. Margaret Keech

MEMBER FOR ALBERT

Hansard Wednesday, 14 March 2007

SECURITY PROVIDERS AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. MM KEECH (Albert—ALP) (Minister for Tourism, Fair Trading, Wine Industry Development and Women) (5.17 pm), in reply: At the outset I thank all members for their contributions to the bill. I am really impressed with the quality of the contributions and, in particular, the amount of consultation members have had at their local level regarding the Security Providers Amendment Bill. I also thank the coalition for its support through the member for Clayfield.

This is an historic day not only for the security industry of Queensland but also for all Queenslanders. At some stage during the day and during the week every one of us rely on the services of members who are regulated through the security providers bill. Whether someone is at work, at home, enjoying themselves during the day at South Bank or at one of the regional parklands, or whether someone is enjoying themselves in the evening at licensed premises or a nightclub, the security industry plays a role in protecting our lives and our property. That is why I am very proud to be presenting this bill to the House.

The importance of the bill is recognised through the very large number of members who have contributed both from the government and the non-government sides. In particular, the bill is historic because it boosts the standards of the security industry in Queensland. It will bring the highest standards of probity as well as licensing previously unregulated sectors of the industry. The new code of practice for the industry has been welcomed by the industry itself. As members have said, it will provide a new level of compliance and regulation.

I now want to move on to some areas raised by the member for Clayfield. In particular, I want to address his criticism of the bill—and of course we cannot have an opposition supporting a bill without trying very hard to find areas to criticise. Opposition members had to search high and low until they found the area to criticise, and they chose the issue of time frames. I cannot comment on previous ministers who were responsible for this portfolio, but I can say that, to my recollection, the very first industry association meeting I had when I became minister for fair trading in 2004 was with the security industry at the premises of the LHMU, which arranged a meeting with employers. After I listened very carefully to the concerns of the employers, I said at that meeting that I would ensure there would be extensive consultation with both employers and the union to ensure that all sectors of the industry had their say.

I am proud that the government has been able to fulfil that commitment of listening and consulting widely with the industry. I make no apologies whatsoever for the time it has taken. In fact, in the consultation I have had up until very recently, not one member of the industry has complained to me about the length of time being taken. So I do not believe that issue has legs at all.

The member for Clayfield also accused me of plagiarism for adopting the industry's recommendations. On the one hand I am expected to consult with the industry, and on the other hand if the industry makes recommendations the government is accused of plagiarism. Once again, if I put a group of experts together and they work very well together in an industry stakeholders committee and they bring a report to the government, if the government adopts large amounts of that report and that is called

plagiarism then I plead guilty. I believe it is actually the government doing the right thing by consulting widely and listening to the concerns of industry.

It is true that in the early stages of consultation the security industry called for higher standards of conduct in the industry. We have certainly done that through a regime of comprehensive codes of conduct for each part of the industry. As well, the government has raised probity standards and given the chief executive better powers to enforce them.

I am also pleased that, contrary to the point made by not only the member for Clayfield but also the members for Robina and Currumbin that this bill is reactive to the COAG review, I can inform those honourable members that that is not correct. In fact, this bill pre-empted any national harmonisation. My department was getting on with the review of the act long before the Premier and members of COAG met to ensure that due to counter-terrorism issues there would be a COAG review. Once again, in this case, the Beattie government has been proactive and led the way in the review of the Security Providers Act.

The member for Clayfield also raised some issues regarding transitional provisions in new section 60(3), and these relate to the training regime for crowd controllers and bodyguards. The member had some difficulty understanding this provision, and I will just explain it to him. An applicant for a crowd controller licence authorising bodyguard functions who applied for that licence prior to commencement of the amendments will be subject to the training requirements that were in force when they lodged the application. That means we do not expect to make this retrospective in the sense that, if you have already applied for a licence, then the training provisions that occurred previously will remain in force. I think this is a common-sense response and it certainly does not add any additional impost on those licensees.

The other issue with respect to training is the class 2 licensees. This is the non-manpower industry. During the extensive consultation that not only my department did but I personally did, particularly with ASIAL, the need for regulation of the non-manpower part of the industry was really pushed home to me time and time again at every meeting. As we know, the electronic security industry is becoming more and more important, whether it is from an anti-terrorism perspective or from protecting property and people. It is a very important area that previously had not been regulated, and I am pleased that the bill provides for that.

Class 2 licensees are those installers and trainers who are involved in what is now described as the non-manpower part of the industry. Probity requirements of the act are being enforced for this section of the industry but not the training requirements. The member for Clayfield asked questions with respect to that. In particular, there are a range of reasons for this. I was very pleased to meet with the non-manpower segment of the industry recently, a meeting that the member for Pumicestone commented on. I also thank the member for Kurwongbah for facilitating that meeting.

The government will not be introducing additional training and competency requirements for class 2 licensees because trade competency and training is already governed by trade licensing regimes and other legislation. Electricians are required to complete their trade and prove their competency that way. Cablers are required to get a cabling licence, which theoretically involves satisfying the Commonwealth of their competency. As well, the member for Mount Ommaney actually made a very comprehensive comment on this matter, and I would encourage the member for Clayfield to review the member for Mount Ommaney's contribution in *Hansard* regarding training requirements.

When I met with the electronic surveillance representatives, they raised this issue with me and it was one of the major issues we discussed. I said to them that, as minister for fair trading, trade licensing requirements were not my responsibility, but I was prepared through my department to help them in any way I could. If they wish to have additional trade licensing requirements and additional competency standards, I am prepared to provide support for them through the various ministers. It is certainly not the object of this bill or the Security Providers Act to duplicate the efforts of other ministers' portfolios.

I also respond to one point made by the member for Broadwater in her contribution and acknowledge the very unfortunate experience that she and her friend had. She asked about the role of unions in providing input into the code of conduct. Unions, employers and employer associations will be consulted again very widely in the establishment of the code of conduct.

The member for Clayfield, when scratching around trying to find some negativities, commented that the regulations, which include the code of conduct, have lagged behind the legislation. We raised this issue when debating the body corporate bill last week and, again, this shows the member's lack of experience in the House. I recognise that he is a new member, but I did explain to him that an actual bill is required to have a head of power for regulations. So we introduce the bill, then after that the regulations are provided for in ensuring that the bill provides the head of power. Also, it is not appropriate for me to be pre-empting Her Excellency the Governor in terms of details of a regulation, but I can inform the honourable member that there will be full consultation with all areas of industry and union in the preparations for the code of conduct.