



Speech by

Hon. Margaret Keech

MEMBER FOR ALBERT

Hansard Thursday, 15 March 2007

SECURITY PROVIDERS AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. MM KEECH (Albert—ALP) (Minister for Tourism, Fair Trading, Wine Industry Development and Women) (11.38 am), continuing in reply: I thank the House for the opportunity to resume my summing-up speech on the Security Providers Amendment Bill 2006. Members should be proud of the provisions which we debated last night. It means that the security industry in Queensland will have the toughest laws in all of Australia. In particular, the Beattie government is absolutely determined to reign in rogue operators and set new standards for industry conduct, training and accountability. I am pleased that not only the coalition but also the Independents will support the government in these new amendments.

In particular, the government is very serious about cracking down on rogue operators. The new laws will bring in penalties of up to \$37,500 for a first offence, which is five times more than the current penalty. In addition, we will be strengthening the entry provisions. We want to make it tougher for rogue operators to enter the security industry. We will be ensuring that they have ongoing training; they will have a code of conduct to ensure this happens.

I refer to some issues raised by the member for Clayfield. In particular I refer to the issue regarding loss prevention officers. He asked whether the licensing requirements of the new provisions will apply to part-time workers or full-time workers who engage in other duties as well as security. For the member's information, the answer is that part-time security providers will require a licence. There is no leeway whether they work part-time or full-time. However, the government will not be checking time sheets to determine a person's hours of work and whether they are part-time or full-time. If a person wishes to engage in security work they will need a licence. If the substantive work a person does is of a security nature then they will be required to be licensed under the Security Providers Act.

People employed on licensed premises to do security work will, regardless of how much work they do, be required to be licensed under the act. This is in response to the very serious issue of outlaw motorcycle gangs infiltrating the security industry, in particular on the Gold Coast. My department has heard of cases where unscrupulous licensees, particularly those in nightclubs, have employed men under the guise of being glassies when they really do expect them to provide security as crowd controllers. These unscrupulous licensees know that under no circumstances would these people be allowed to receive a licence. That was one way of getting around the current licensing arrangements. These new provisions will ensure, particularly in licensed premises, that if people are doing security type work, regardless of what the employer would like to call it, they will need to be licensed.

This leads me to another issue that the member for Clayfield raised regarding clause 15 and the use of unrecorded convictions and additional police information. It is interesting to note that despite the fact that those in the Liberal Party have concerns regarding clause 15 the National Party, particularly the member for Bundaberg, did not. This shows that there is cooperation in the security industry but there is not so much cooperation and talking in the coalition. I was pleased to receive the support of the member for Bundaberg. He understands that the use of unrecorded convictions and additional police information is all about ensuring that these unscrupulous members, such as those from outlaw motorcycle gangs, do not enter the security industry.

The member for Gladstone asked about the destruction of material that is the subject of background checks. I inform her that all materials will be handled in accordance with the privacy principles and government protocols for document storage and destruction. The chief executive will also be subject to conditions imposed by the Commissioner of Police in providing this information.

The member for Clayfield raised the issue of resourcing. I can inform him that the Office of Fair Trading does regular spot checks of security providers, particularly when there are major events such as Indy. These regular as well as targeted compliance operations will continue. Compliance activities will be ramped up under the new laws and appropriate resources will be available to carry out this task.

I now refer to application processing times. The member for Clayfield claimed that my department routinely takes up to 14 weeks to process a licence application. This is simply untrue. During January 2007 it took an average of 15 calendar days to process a full licence application. The average period is getting shorter because of the hard work of the officers of my department. In fact, the reason there is a longer period for licence application processing on occasions is the failure of applicants to provide all the information that the department needs. I would encourage employers to ensure that if staff members are applying for a licence everything is filled in. That will ensure that the application can be processed in the shortest time possible.

The member for Bundaberg also raised the issue of locksmiths. I appreciated his contribution. He has done a lot of consultation. In consulting on these new provisions the department wanted to ensure that we had a balance between overregulation and ensuring that home handypeople and those in low-risk occupations can continue their work without the very heavy impost of extra regulation. I believe the reforms strike a good balance between regulation to protect consumers and the cost of overregulation.

To regulate every person who might install a door lock or cut a key would be over the top and serve nobody's interests. The government is not trying to regulate the neighbourhood handyperson. Consultation with industry and consumers showed that nearly everyone is happy with the provisions. That says to me that we have the balance right. I thank the member for his comments.

I appreciate the wide consultation that I have had with the industry, the Liquor, Hospital and Miscellaneous Workers Union—in particular Ron Monaghan and Gary Bullock for their work in bringing the industry together—and the industry association ASIAL, which has worked very well with the government and has produced Australia's best security industry regulation. I also commend the electronic security industry, the non-manpower sector, for their contribution to the bill.

What has been very pleasing through the whole consultation process is that it enabled a diverse range of industries—particularly those that had previously not been regulated—to come together in the best interest of producing the highest standards for the security providers industry. When I met with the industry I was very impressed with their real desire to have the highest professional standards and ensure that the bad eggs are excluded—and we did hear from members about the bad eggs who, unfortunately, are still out there. The industry and the government are determined as one to kick out these bad eggs. Not only do we want to kick them out; we want to ensure that they never enter the industry.

I commend ASIAL, the union and all who have consulted with the government on their professional approach and, in particular, their desire to have the very best practice for the security providers industry in all of Australia. The work that the providers do, whether it is crowd control or dog handling or something else, is very challenging work. It is difficult work. In an era of terrorism the work can also be very dangerous. At this stage I would like to commend the men and women—and there are many women in the industry; I think that is a good thing because they provide a different approach to security particularly in difficult circumstances at nightclubs—for the good work they are doing. I thank them for working with the government to provide a bill that all members, both government and non-government members, can be very proud of indeed.

I thank those in the Office of Fair Trading in my department who have done outstanding work in getting this bill ready for the parliament. In particular I would like to thank Danny Lowe. From my office I thank Cameron Crowther who has really put a lot of effort into ensuring that the bill represents the needs and desires of the government and also the industry. With those words, I conclude my remarks and commend the bill to the House.