



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR TABLELANDS

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MOTION: DISALLOWANCE OF STATUTORY INSTRUMENT

Ms LEE LONG (Tablelands—ONP) (9.01 pm): I rise to support this disallowance motion which introduces demerit point penalties for exceeding a variety of time related regulations. Three demerit points will be deducted from a drivers licence if drivers exceed their maximum driving time by two hours or more, if they exceed maximum continuous driving time by two hours or more, if they exceed total work time by two hours or more, exceed maximum continuous work time by two hours or more, fail to meet minimum rest time by a shortfall of two hours or more, and the list goes on. In fact, in addition to those that I have mentioned, there are another 26 sections which will attract a new penalty which is in addition to any financial or other penalty that may be imposed. It is also proposed to include two demerit point penalties for seven more sections. Essentially, these are when various driving related time limits have been breached by between one and two hours.

There is no doubt that road safety is an important issue, but it really needs far more commitment on the part of this government to make a real difference. These kinds of regulatory changes in reality do nothing more than make it more and more difficult for our heavy transport operators to meet the growing demands that are being placed upon them. The corporatisation of our railways has very rapidly led to a cutting of services on all but the most profitable routes. There is now no alternative to putting more and more freight on to our road networks. It was decisions of the state government that corporatised Queensland Rail. It was decisions of the state government that have forced entire regions to fall back on to road transport as their only freight solution. It was decisions of the state government that have left our road networks in a pathetically poor condition and totally unable to cope with those exact same demands now being placed on them.

Instead of improving roads and instead of making a physically safer environment for all drivers, we get cheap and nasty solutions such as harsher penalties and tighter conditions. Let us consider the reality facing our heavy transport operators. A truck carrying freight to far-north Queensland leaves Brisbane. The driver is required to stop after 12 hours. He is then required to rest for a certain period, then drive for a set period and then stop to rest again and so on. That is a regulatory requirement. If he does not do that he faces penalties which directly affect his ability to earn a living. But are there rest stops at 12-hour intervals? Are they safe and large enough for a number of heavy transport trucks, of firm footing and useable in all weather? Do they have such very basic facilities such as toilets, a tap and maybe even a table with a roof over it where a driver can have a meal? If it is a truck without a sleeper unit, then how is the driver expected to rest if he cannot find a motel or other bed in time? Are there such stops 12 hours in each direction from Townsville, Cairns, Mount Isa, Mackay, Toowoomba, Kingaroy, Karumba and all of the other places that heavy transport travels to and from? If this government is going to insist on these driving restrictions for heavy transport drivers, then surely it is reasonable to think that it should provide at least the most basic facilities to make it possible for drivers to abide by these regulations.

My time is running out so I simply say in conclusion that this government has a duty of care to ensure that drivers are able to operate within a reasonable and safe road environment, and I support the motion.