



Speech by

## Vaughan Johnson

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

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### SUMMARY OFFENCES AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

**Mr JOHNSON** (Gregory—NPA) (7.52 pm): The Summary Offences and Other Acts Amendment Bill is a very important piece of legislation in many ways. Whilst the opposition supports the legislation, we do have reservations about a couple of aspects of it—and no doubt the shadow minister has alluded to those tonight.

I do not intend to speak for too long. The one aspect I want to canvass this evening is the issue of the penalties for people who sell spray-paint to minors and the damage that minors can do with spray-paint. I say to the minister this evening that there seems to be great emphasis on penalising the suppliers of spray-paint, but I believe that we should be looking very closely at the end use of the spray-paint and what penalties are applicable to those who use it to damage property. The penalties that apply to them do not seem anywhere near as harsh as the penalties that apply to the supplier of the product. It is always very difficult to police this satisfactorily unless it occurs in a prominent area where surveillance cameras are in place. It is always going to be very difficult for the custodians of public property, or private property for that matter, to detect these louts in our communities.

I support the minister in her endeavours to try to stamp this out. When I was the minister for transport one of the main issues every year with Queensland Rail was the disfigurement of railway property and the countless millions of dollars to paint over the damage and remove the blemish from QR rolling stock and railway property et cetera. I note that in the minister's second reading speech she mentions that the bill to QR is \$2 million annually. That is a lot of chaff in anyone's language.

The time has come. Over a period of time we have seen many criminals apprehended—whether it be in a shopping centre or in the Brisbane mall or at a railway station or in some other public area—because they have committed a serious crime against the community. We cannot have too much surveillance equipment to detect these people. The real issue here—and I draw this to the minister's attention—is the penalties for the minors who breach the law and commit these offences. At the end of the day, we live in a beautiful state, we have beautiful infrastructure and it is a fantastic place to be. I just wonder how these people look after their own property at home. Do they disfigure their own property? Do they treat their parents with respect? Or has something broken down in society that makes them want to commit a crime against the taxpayers of the state? This is an unfortunate situation.

This is not only a question for the police minister but also a question for the Attorney-General to make absolutely certain that if the police do bring these people before the courts they will receive the appropriate penalty for their acts. That is the one aspect that I know the police are concerned about and that many other people around Queensland are concerned about.

Another aspect of the legislation I want to reflect on this evening is the issue of mobile phone texting. Mobile phones are a common fact of life now in modern western democratic societies, and in any other society for that matter. Most kids at school seem to have the damn things these days. I wish to God I never had one myself. Every time the phone rings the call goes to the message bank before I get a chance to pick it up, and answering messages left on the message bank costs me more than what the phone calls would have cost.

This legislation addresses the issue of texting friends or somebody else to advise them of where speed cameras are located or where random breath tests or vehicle inspections are being conducted or whatever. As the minister at the time responsible for the introduction of speed cameras, I am sad to say that speed cameras should never have been hidden the way they are, and I say that in all sincerity. The other day when I was driving down the Bruce Highway I saw one of those speed cameras located in a four-wheel drive that was backed in behind a bridge and a tree, and the sign was just in front of the car. You would need to have a telescopic lens that could go around corners to see it! You would not see it until you went past it. People do flick their lights up and down the highway to warn motorists of a speed camera.

I know that the minister for transport is going to introduce fixed speed cameras, which I support. I think they are a fantastic initiative. They operate very well in New South Wales. I reckon they have a more calming effect on traffic than mobile speed cameras, although I do think mobile speed cameras have a place if they are used properly. I do not think there is any great alarm in having legislation like this that penalises people for alerting others about them. At the end of the day, those fixed cameras will have a role and the technology available is going to be very sophisticated—it will be very accurate and precise. I know that a lot of people question the accuracy of speed cameras. At the time speed cameras were introduced in Queensland personnel in the department of transport in conjunction with personnel from Queensland police undertook an in-depth investigation into what was the right technology to adopt in this state, and I believe that the outcomes of that have been very successful.

At the same time, as the member for Redlands mentioned a while ago, these issues are about road safety. This is about trying to decrease the number of fatalities and serious injuries that occur on our roads. The transport legislation currently before the House will be very beneficial in making our roads even safer, especially for young drivers. We have to target young people while, at the same time, making absolutely certain that all people uphold the road laws, are conversant with them and drive according to the conditions. The police can play a very integral role in all of this through the proper use of speed cameras. For example, a camera should be positioned in one location for an hour and then moved somewhere else. Cameras should not be hidden behind bridges and trees. I have seen them hidden in bushes on the Ipswich Motorway, near Dinmore and such places. Let us get fair dinkum about this. The general public does not want idiots on the road and we want the police to be able to do the best surveillance job possible. However, I believe that tonight we are going too far by penalising people for telephone texting about speed camera locations.

An issue that I and many others on this side of the House have raised is telephone tapping powers for police. Apparently we do not want anyone to tip off where the police are located, yet we will not give the police the proper tools—and I am talking about telephone tapping powers—to apprehend the scum of society who need to be apprehended, brought to justice and put into the right place for the crimes that they commit against society. Some of those crimes are very serious crimes.

Today during the address-in-reply debate I was reading the Governor's speech in which she talked about the money that has been set aside this year for sex offenders and those who commit crimes against women and kids. We have to get a bit more fair dinkum about these issues. The justice system has to be revised to ensure that our police receive the backup that they need to ensure that when they apprehend scum, those criminals receive a fair penalty and are put away for their efforts. This lack in our system is demoralising our police.

I say to the minister that this Summary Offences and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2006 is a very important piece of legislation. However, I do hope that the government does not face the embarrassment of soon having to bring it back to the House for amendment. The police need strong tools, but we cannot have two bob each way. I feel that, in some small part, that is what is happening in this legislation.