



Speech by

**Shane Knuth**

**MEMBER FOR CHARTERS TOWERS**

Hansard Wednesday, 27 February 2008

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## **CRIMINAL CODE (ASSAULTS AGAINST POLICE AND OTHERS) AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mr KNUTH** (Charters Towers—NPA) (8.59 pm): The police, firies and ambos are the real heroes of our modern society, especially in Queensland. They work with limited resources, very little funds and often outdated equipment provided by this state government, yet they continue to deliver a valuable service to all Queenslanders. Unfortunately, a percentage of thugs have little or no regard for the work that those people do or the conditions that they have to work under. Those thugs know little about discipline and believe that any emergency worker is fair game, able to be abused, attacked and spat upon. They would have been schoolyard bullies who beat up younger students and intimidated school staff. They believe in the message that you can do what you like with little or no consequences. This legislation will effectively invalidate that message and replace it with one that clearly says, 'Mess with the people employed to help you and you will be punished.'

Every day there are assaults on police officers, workers in the emergency departments at our hospitals, ambulance officers and firemen, and people are tired of seeing the people who commit those crimes being slapped on the wrist. Emergency services workers must be able to do their jobs without fear of being bashed, spat on and abused. This problem is getting out of control.

The member for Burdekin referred to an article in the *Townsville Bulletin*, which I will quote from and table.

**A government member:** Do your own research.

**Mr KNUTH:** This is quite simple because it is real.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr KNUTH:** Are members opposite saying that the *Townsville Bulletin* is lying? I table that article.

*Tabled paper:* Copy of an article from the *Townsville Bulletin*, dated 23 February 2008, titled "We're not punching bags": Everyday heroes under attack'.

The headline of this front-page article states, 'We're not punching bags', and there is a picture of a young Townsville female constable, Tennelle Luscombe, who was savagely king hit on 4 July while trying to break up a brawl in Flinders Street East. She needed surgery to her jaw, cheek and eye socket, which had to be reconstructed. The culprit has yet to be caught and the police are still investigating this incident. Obviously members opposite would want such thugs caught, prosecuted and jailed.

As the headlines state, these officers are becoming punching bags. Nurses, doctors, police officers, paramedics, taxidrivers, council workers and security staff are being attacked every week in the twin cities. Last year 202 northern regional police officers were assaulted. That figure does not include assaults against nine officers during the past two months. Seventeen staff members at the Townsville Hospital have reported assaults since last July. Queensland Police Service statistics show that during the 2006-07 financial year, the northern police region was the most violent in the state. There were 2,390 assaults in the northern region alone. Every day an average of six assaults were reported, and that number does not

include domestic violence. The scary thing is that the numbers dropped by two per cent from the previous year.

At present, punishment is limited because the do-gooders in our society see this aggression as some throwback to childhood, claiming that the offenders had a terrible upbringing. They pussyfoot around the issue rather than dealing with the real problem of the spiralling aggression in our society.

The Queensland Police Union reported that there have been over 3,000 assaults against police in the past 18 months. These alarming statistics, together with the recent media reports of serious attacks on police officers, demonstrate the lack of respect some offenders have for police and their disregard for the law generally. While offenders do appear in the courts to answer charges for assaulting police officers, unfortunately frequently the sentences awarded do not meet community expectations. A mandatory jail sentence would send a clear message to the thugs that assaulting our police officers and emergency services personnel will not be tolerated. I commend this bill to the House.