



Speech by

Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

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CRIME AND MISCONDUCT AND SUMMARY OFFENCES AMENDMENT BILL

Ms GRACE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (4.53 pm): I rise to support the Crime and Misconduct and Summary Offences Amendment Bill 2009. I rise to speak specifically for a short time on the bill's amendments to the Summary Offences Act 2005 which will introduce the offence of endangering the safe use of a vehicle by throwing an object or by a similar activity. As we all know, recent media coverage has highlighted the general public's concern about the potential danger from rocks and other objects being thrown at travelling vehicles or on to a road. Previous speakers have outlined a number of cases and listed the various types of situations that drivers have found themselves in from people throwing objects either at a vehicle or on to a road.

The reason I want to speak about this issue is that I actually had a real-life experience of it. Many years ago, I was actually a victim of this crime when something was thrown at the vehicle I was driving in the suburb of New Farm. Even though this incident occurred many years ago, probably well over 30 years ago, the reality of what happened and the memories are still very vivid in my mind. A combination of mud and pebbles were thrown at the windscreen of my car by a bunch of teenagers who were out having what they thought was a bit of a good time.

They threw this combination of pebbles and mud at the windscreen while I was driving, and I was filled with horror when it hit the windscreen. I had no idea what had happened. I swerved, and luckily there were no cars coming in the opposite direction. It was only by sheer luck that I did not crash. I was only inches away from hitting a tree after I had driven up onto the footpath. Once again, I was lucky there were no pedestrians or vehicles and I was lucky I did not hit anything. Being a victim and having something thrown at my vehicle is an act and experience I would rather not have gone through.

There are offences for this at the moment, such as endangering the safe use of a vehicle, endangering the safety of a person in a vehicle with intent, causing grievous bodily harm or other malicious acts. They carry maximum penalties of life imprisonment. In more serious cases where death results, the charge could be murder or manslaughter. Murder and manslaughter also carry mandatory life imprisonment. However, these only apply where there is proof of malicious intent. Due to community attitudes on this issue changing, this bill has become a step in the right direction. There is now a specific offence directed at rock throwing and other dangerous conduct, such as directing a laser pointer at a vehicle. These will complement the existing suite of offences I have already referred to.

The proposed offence is not reliant on proof of malicious intent and will apply where the conduct is likely to endanger the safe use of a vehicle without the establishment of actual endangerment. The bill establishes the offence where there is no personal injury or property damage caused by the perpetrator. I guess that would be an offence similar to my own personal experience.

This will be a new offence that the police can use as a further charging option in the case of rock throwing and other dangerous conduct. I think the police will welcome this further and new offence to go with the current suite they now use. I believe it sends a clear signal that these actions are not acceptable. The bill goes a long way to addressing the growing community concern about the increasing number of such incidents occurring in the general public. I commend the bill to the House.