



Speech by

## Hon. Neil Roberts

MEMBER FOR NUDGE

Hansard Thursday, 21 May 2009

---

### CRIME AND MISCONDUCT AND SUMMARY OFFENCES AMENDMENT BILL

**Hon. NS ROBERTS** (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services) (5.52 pm): I am pleased to speak in support of the Crime and Misconduct and Summary Offences Amendment Bill 2009. The aspect of this bill that has particular significance for me, as Minister for Police, is the amendments to the Summary Offences Act 2005 to insert a specific offence applying to rock throwing and other specified conduct which endangers or is likely to endanger the safe use of vehicles.

Police and Emergency Services personnel in Queensland are sometimes called to attend at scenes of road accidents where the accident was caused by someone throwing an object on the road. The incidence of these rock-throwing offences is growing, and members of the community have been rightly concerned about this conduct.

Where there is personal or property damage caused by the throwing of the object, there is already a range of offences in Queensland with which they can be charged. Police have, until now, been almost powerless to deal with situations where no personal injury or property damage has occurred, or where proof of malicious intent cannot be proven. This new offence will fill this gap, and add another weapon to the arsenal of police in combating dangerous conduct on our roads.

Ambulance drivers and fire and rescue personnel spend a lot of time on the roads, and their sometimes challenging and difficult job is made even more challenging and more difficult by incidents such as those that have been reported in the media where rocks have been thrown at passing emergency services vehicles. If a vehicle is damaged, this may mean the difference between life and death. Luckily, there have not been any incidents where this has occurred to date, but imagine the effect on everyone concerned if an emergency vehicle were unable to attend to someone in time to save their life because it had been damaged in such an incident.

In fact, on 22 and 23 March this year, ambulances were hit in two rock-throwing incidents in the one night—in fact, within a period of two hours. The first rock-throwing attack happened about 11.30 pm on Brisbane Road near the Dinmore Fire Station while paramedics were transporting a two-year-old girl with breathing difficulties to Ipswich Hospital. The child and her parent were slightly shaken but fine and minor damage was caused to the ambulance. The second attack occurred at about 1.30 am on the Mount Lindesay Highway at Regents Park while an ambulance crew were heading back to their station when a rock hit and smashed the left rear window of the ambulance.

On the same night a truck driver was injured. The crew from the previous incident were on their way to collect a replacement vehicle when they responded to a truck driver whose windscreen was struck and smashed by a rock in the same location. The truck driver was treated for eye injuries and taken to hospital by a second crew after shards of glass flew into his face from the shattered windscreen.

The proposed offence will be referred to as endangering the safe use of a vehicle by throwing an object or by a similar activity and applies to any person who throws an object at or places an object in the

path of a vehicle that is travelling. Another limb to the offence is where a person directs a beam of light from a laser at or near a vehicle that is travelling. New South Wales, South Australia and the Northern Territory have already enacted specific offences related to throwing rocks or other objects at vehicles, and this new Queensland offence will cover this same conduct.

Queensland has not been standing still on this issue. Last year the former Attorney-General brought in the new offence of endangering the safe use of vehicles with intent, which carries a maximum penalty of life imprisonment, and covers the more serious end of the spectrum. This new offence will cover the lower end offences, where a person may not act with malicious intent but still acts with gross stupidity and little regard for others in our community and by sheer luck manages not to cause injury to someone or damage to their property. Whatever end of the spectrum you fall within, the message here is clear—throwing rocks at vehicles is never a joke; it is deadly, reckless behaviour.