



Speech by
Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

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TRANSPORT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL; TRANSPORT OPERATIONS (ROAD USE MANAGEMENT- INTERLOCKS) AMENDMENT BILL

Ms GRACE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (3.04 pm): I rise to support the Transport and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2010 and to make a short contribution. I welcome the primary purpose of this bill. The purpose of the bill is to provide for the introduction of alcohol ignition interlocks in Queensland for all high-risk drink drivers, to extend the no-alcohol limit to a broader range of drivers and to implement national reforms for heavy vehicle speeding. I believe the three primary reasons for this bill being before the House will hopefully go a long way to making our roads much safer for all of us who have to travel on them.

I believe there is a need to change the culture in relation to drink driving. Compared to when I was young, I have seen a marked shift in how we actually look at the issue of drinking and driving. I remember when I was growing up that this certainly was not a major issue. I am very sad to say that many of my friends really did not take any notice of how much they drank before they got behind the wheel. It is pleasing to see that much has been done in relation to changing that culture which was to go out, drink and get behind the wheel. Obviously we cannot rest on our laurels. This is about continuing that cultural shift and mindset about drinking and driving. There is much more that needs to be done.

Like others in this House, I want to reduce the incidence of road accidents and, in particular, road deaths. Just like in the workplace, one death on our roads is one death too many. Anything we can do to prevent those injuries and deaths occurring should be done. It is sad to see, from the statistics I have been reading, that around one in three Queenslanders who have been convicted of drink driving were either repeat offenders or high-end offenders. When we say high-end offenders—and this has been referred to by other members in this House—we mean people with a blood alcohol concentration of .15 or above.

We have changed the culture about wearing seatbelts. Now people do not get into a car unless they buckle up. This is particularly the case when it comes to kids. I remember when I was a kid we used to ride in the tray of the station wagon. There were no seatbelts. I remember once that we drove all the way to Sydney in that way. We have seen a significant culture shift. I doubt any parent would put their child in the car without putting on a seatbelt.

It is a cultural shift that this bill is trying to address and trying to maintain. There is no disputing that drink driving is dangerous and is responsible for many accidents on our roads. The clear message has to be sent—and that is what this bill tries to do—to those who are repeat offenders or high-end offenders that drink driving will not be tolerated.

When I first heard about alcohol ignition interlocks for high-risk and repeat offenders I must admit that I had no sympathy for recidivists. I believe they do need a very strong message sent to them because it is this group of people that must change their culture when it comes to drink driving. They have to get the

message that this is unacceptable. We as a society have to send a very clear message, both legislatively and in the manner in which we act, that repeat offending needs to stop.

When I first heard about alcohol ignition interlocks I had not seen one and I really did not know what they looked like. I was not sure how they worked. I was grateful to read the research conducted by the Queensland Parliamentary Library into alcohol ignition interlocks. I commend them for their work. I thought the research was excellent.

When I read that research I was pleased to learn that the device can be connected to the ignition, electrical or other systems of the vehicle or car. This device actually measures the breath alcohol concentration of the potential driver. The vehicle will not start unless the driver passes the test. That is, they breathe into the apparatus and they have to have a no-alcohol reading. The obvious question came to me as it probably did to others in this House: can you tamper with this device?

For example, can a sober passenger, a child or a family member submit a breath test to start the vehicle? Many people might think that is a way of tampering with the device. However, it was pleasing to read in the report that the device can be tamper proof in that there are various anticircumvention technologies built into the interlock device. For example, I understand there is a hum-tone detection or a breath pulse code. Those technologies mean that the device can identify that the person who needs to use the device is the person giving the sample and therefore it is tamper proof.

There are also mechanisms built in to ensure that the driver remains alcohol free during the journey by requiring regular retesting at random intervals. Obviously the device will not do this in a dangerous way. My understanding is that it gives five minutes for a driver to pull over safely and take the test. However, if they do not do it within the specified time there are mechanisms built into the device such as making the headlights flash or the horn blow which sends a signal to the driver that they have to pull over and undertake the test. Of course, it is very necessary that when interlocks are fitted the driver is trained in relation to how the system works.

Trials of the devices were undertaken from 2001 to 2003. Although there were only a small number of people involved in the trial, the testing showed that interlocks did have the potential to reduce reoffending and drink-driving rates. Early findings of that trial confirmed that there was a reduction in recidivism, and of course that has to be good news when it comes to road safety and good news for us as users of the road in that a person reoffending will have these devices installed which will not allow them to continue to drive on the roads without some form of prevention in terms of getting behind the wheel. There was also clear evidence that interlocks prevent drink driving while installed, meaning that the culture of the person was changing in terms of their actions before they got back behind the wheel of a car.

I acknowledge that in the bill there are some exceptions to the installation of interlock devices. The exemptions are common sense. For example, a person can be exempt for medical reasons, if they live in a rural or remote area that is not serviced in terms of installation of these particular devices, or any other extraordinary circumstances on grounds that will be set out in the regulations. If someone has a problem with the order being placed on them, there is the possibility of a review by QCAT if necessary. I believe that that is the proper place for that review to take place. Coupled with this are harsh penalties for those who breach interlock conditions.

I welcome the extension of the no-alcohol limit to all learner, provisional, probationary and unlicensed drivers regardless of their age. This currently applies only to those under 25, but I agree that it should be equal and I support the amendment. I also support the no-alcohol limit for all motorcycle riders for the first 12 months after obtaining their licence. I have never ridden a motorcycle. I do not know exactly the mechanisms, but I understand from those who do that the first 12 months after obtaining a licence are probably the most dangerous. Therefore, the no-alcohol limit is another common-sense approach. This legislation will not impact at all on those who do the right thing on our roads, because if you do not drink and drive there will be no change when using our roads.

I welcome the amendments to heavy vehicle speeding in that they recognise that the entire chain of responsibility must be included in controlling this hazard. Parties in the transport chain must be able to show no influence in forcing a driver to speed due to unreasonable delivery times being set. There also has to be a reasonable plan in place to enable a driver in all circumstances to make deliveries between two points—point A and point B—in a time that complies with speed limits. Unfortunately, many in the workplace do not control the manner in which that work is carried out. In particular for heavy vehicle drivers, their workplace is their vehicle. If unattainable demands are put on them to get from one point to another due to pressure being put on them in terms of being sacked or losing income, that is unacceptable and I welcome the fact that that entire chain of command now has a responsibility to ensure a safe workplace for heavy vehicle drivers and at the same time ensure that roads are safer for these vehicles. As we know, accidents involving a heavy vehicle can be quite tragic and quite devastating. This is all about ensuring that there are reasonable targets for these drivers and that we make the roads safer, and I welcome all of the amendments in the bill in relation to that issue.

I agree with the introduction of a smart card and the fact that our current licences need to be more secure, particularly for young people and women who may use their licence as a form of identification when entering nightclubs or other places. At the moment our licences are not that secure in that they contain information that is probably not necessary for identification, and I welcome the introduction of a smart card that is much more secure in that information is stored on the card but is not for the eyes of everyone where identification is required. Smart cards may not be as useful in that they do not have full personal details if they are required, but my understanding is that the smart card will definitely have enough information on it to allow it to be used for identification in all of the different forms that a licence may be used for today. For all of those reasons, I commend the bill to the House.