



Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE

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

Mr KNUTH (Dalrymple—LNP) (7.45 pm): In speaking to the Transport and Other Legislation Amendment Bill and the Transport Operations (Road Use Management—Interlocks) Amendment Bill in this cognate debate, the minister in her second reading speech stated—

This bill introduces significant amendments that will provide for the introduction of alcohol ignition interlocks in Queensland for all high-risk drink drivers ...

She also stated—

The bill introduces a scheme of alcohol interlocks for high-risk drink drivers. We need to take action against drivers convicted of repeat or high-level drink-driving offences or of dangerous driving when affected by alcohol. They have shown an inability to appropriately separate the activities of drinking and driving. Alcohol ignition interlocks address this issue head-on. A driver must first pass a breath test in order for their vehicle to start.

I fully agree. However, I have to say that the Bligh-Beattie government has procrastinated since 2002 when it promised to introduce alcohol interlocks for repeat drink-driving offenders. The Travelsafe Committee recommended that laws be implemented to install electronic breath tests, known as alcohol interlock devices. It is the LNP that has led the charge with the introduction of its bill some four months ago to introduce alcohol interlock devices and to remove repeat offenders from our roads in order to reduce the carnage. I was on the Travelsafe Committee under the chairmanship of Jim Pearce, who proposed this initiative and who pushed for this years ago, but it has not been implemented. It is the LNP that has pursued and pushed this issue when those opposite say that we do not have policies. We have put it forward and argued for it and now the government is going to implement it. If we did not push for it, the government would not be implementing it.

It is not the drivers at the lower end of the scale who are the problem but drivers with a blood alcohol content of .15 or more, many of whom are repeat offenders. Targeting these drivers through the alcohol interlock system would mean that they would be ordered to have the device installed or undergo rehabilitation courses. It is a responsibility to hold a driver's licence, and those who abuse the privilege should be faced with the full thrust of the law. Those caught with a blood alcohol content of .15 or over three times in five years should be heavily disciplined. Research shows that 35 per cent of people who died in road accidents in 2009 had a BAC of .05 or higher.

I disagree with reducing the blood alcohol content from .05 to .02, because there is no proof that this will reduce accidents. It is a draconian measure and only serves to punish responsible drinkers who only have a minimal risk of being involved in an accident. If the BAC was reduced, you could kiss goodbye to the great Aussie tradition of pulling in for a counter meal with a cold beer or a glass of wine. These changes will only target sensible, law-abiding people who are modest drinkers and who have always known their limits. These changes will do nothing but place hardworking mums and dads on the front page of the newspaper.

It should be remembered that many mouthwashes and medicines have a high alcohol content, which has the potential to either put drivers over the .02 limit or give them an unwarranted trip to the police station. A driver's licence is crucial and for a person to be disadvantaged for freshening their breath or getting sick would be a catastrophe.

I have to say that people in rural areas do not have access to public transport. They do not have buses. They do not even have taxis. It is virtually impossible for them to go a pub and have a counter meal and one or two beers without having to drive there. Most people know their limits. To reduce the blood alcohol limit from .05 to .02 would completely destroy our service industry—the restaurants, the sporting clubs, you name it. Although this bill does not contain such a provision, I wanted to bring this issue to the attention of the House. The move to reduce blood alcohol content has been rejected by motoring groups, police, accident research centres and hoteliers who have argued that it would make little difference to reducing the number of accidents. That is very important. I wanted to bring that to the attention of the House.