



Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE

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CRIMINAL CODE (SERIOUS ASSAULTS ON POLICE AND PARTICULAR OTHER PERSONS) AMENDMENT BILL

Mr KNUTH (Dalrymple—LNP) (9.09 pm): I rise to speak in support of the amendments contained in the Criminal Code (Serious Assaults on Police and Particular Other Persons) Amendment Bill. This bill will protect our police officers and emergency service officers from the appalling rise in the incidence of assaults on emergency service personnel. Not only are our police officers and emergency services officers underpaid; they are also underprotected. In a nine-day period in May this year there were six incidents of assault on police in Cairns, and nine were assaulted in May. In March this year in Far North Queensland a police officer was left with numerous fractures to the jaw and a fracture to the cheekbone and head after being bashed by a group of teenagers. When his partner drew a gun the teens taunted him and then continued to punch and kick him unconscious.

There was another incident that I read about in the *Townsville Bulletin*. The article is titled 'Bashed police officer back on job' and states—

A year after being savagely king-hit from behind while trying to break up a brawl involving about 80 people at the nightclub strip, the 27-year-old still bears the scars.

But the vicious thug behind the cowardly July 4 attack is still walking the streets.

It took surgery and a love of her job to get her back to general duty work.

'I couldn't wait to get back because I love my job. I was a bit nervous about going down Flinders St for the first time though.

When I heard a job come over the radio involving a brawl I felt my heart start pounding.'

Constable Luscombe spent three days in hospital following surgery to reconstruct part of her face.

'I had a fractured eye socket, fractured cheek bone and my jaw was fractured near my ear,' she said.

'During surgery they put in six titanium plates behind and around my eye.

'I have scars at the bottom of my ear and all the way over the top of my head ...

This is just one of the hundreds of incidents that occur every year as a result of assaults on police officers, ambulance officers and, likewise, our local fires. The real issue here is getting the clear message out that if any thug, crim or big-noter seriously assaults police officers, ambos or fires they will be punished and do time in jail.

The core issue here is the protection of our emergency service workers and having laws that deter this degeneration of our police officers and emergency services officers. The Queensland Police Union has strongly backed the introduction of mandatory minimum sentencing for those who choose to show the ultimate disregard for the authority of police officers. If members of the public know that the serious assault on police officers, fires or ambulance officers will result in jail time, they will be less likely to resort to this behaviour. The proposed amendments also send a clear message to our emergency services. Our emergency services have been gutted by the inadequacies of our courts when it comes to sentencing the perpetrators of violence against police officers, fires and ambulance officers. These men and women do an incredible job of protecting the public or assisting police. However, they are increasingly finding themselves on the receiving end of assaults.

It is a poor reflection on this government to underpay our emergency services personnel. The government is in breach of its duty of care if it fails to ensure that the law effectively protects those whose job it is to enforce it. The most effective way to do this is to make sure that the penalties for assaults on our police officers are enough to deter perpetrators from physically attacking officers by spitting on them or other monstrous behaviours that expose police officers and emergency personnel to blood and faeces. These low acts need to be dealt with decisively and effectively.