




Speech by

Fiona Simpson

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

Hansard Tuesday, 15 November 2011

WEAPONS AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—LNP) (4.32 pm): I also want to thank our shadow minister, John-Paul Langbroek, for outlining our position in regard to this bill. He has affirmed that we support keeping Queenslanders safe and also that the greatest threat to that safety is not the law-abiding gun owners, who regulated and who pay significant licensing fees, but the criminals, who operate outside any licensing scheme. I declare that I am a patron of the North Arm Rifle Club. I have listened to the concerns of local sporting shooters. This bill deals with a range of issues, including tougher knife laws; includes an expanded definition of bladed weapons to include daggers such as fantasy knives; and ensures the regulation of laser pointers, among other amendments that we support.

Currently under Labor there is a revolving door, where criminals committing armed robbery get bail and go on to offend again. This legislation does not address the serious issue of weak sentencing for armed criminals and the problem of the application of the Bail Act. Instead, this bill seeks to significantly increase penalties for other offences concerning licensed gun owners about which our shadow minister is seeking an explanation from the minister.

I have had a number of questions asked of me about what weapons will or will not be impacted by these changes. I believe it is important that we make decisions today based on the facts. I appreciate that there is also some angst among law-abiding shooters about more change which was particularly caused by the prior consultation draft. This legislation before the House is significantly different from that consultation draft, but, as has been alluded to by my colleagues, there is more legislation that Labor has planned that we are yet to see. I think that has continued to unsettle people, because they have faced a lot of changes. As I have said, law-abiding sporting shooters are the ones who are operating within the system. Our concern has been that it is time there was truly a focus on going after the criminals, who are breaking the law and who are causing so much havoc in this state.

I appreciate that issues raised in briefings have been addressed by prior speakers, but I will put on the record that one of the clauses raised with me by some licensed gun owners on which they want clarification is clause 44. I appreciate that at briefings assurances have been given that, for example, old .303s would not be impacted. I seek the minister's confirmation on that in the chamber as well. Specifically, clause 44 of the bill states that certain size magazines—not the guns—are restricted and have been reclassified. Furthermore, in the definitions in the primary act magazines are defined as detachable, not fixed. This matter is important, because some licensed shooters thought this legislation may extend to detachable magazines. I certainly seek the minister's confirmation that that is the correct reading of the bill—that the definition in regard to magazines in this legislation is 'not fixed'. A magazine is detachable, not fixed. Clause 44 states—

The holder must not possess a magazine—

- (a) if the category B weapon has a lever or pump action—with a maximum capacity of more than 10 rounds for the weapon; or
- (b) if the category B weapon is a repeating centre fire rifle—with a maximum capacity of more than 15 rounds for the weapon.

In the primary act the definition of a magazine makes it clearer that it is a detachable magazine, not a fixed magazine. However, I seek the minister's confirmation on what guns specifically will be captured by this legislation so that there is clarity about the implementation.

Mr Roberts: But it's not the guns which are captured; it's the detachable magazine.

Ms SIMPSON: I thank the minister. I appreciate his correction. He is correct: it is the magazines. So more specifically, what combination is envisaged? I understand that there has been concern about more high-powered combinations coming onto the market. Certainly that is the intention behind the legislation, but I think the minister will understand that these are issues that people have sought clarification on.

This legislation covers a number of other weapons, such as knives. Knives are already banned in public places. I think this legislation highlights that in some of the public debate the previous changes to the legislation to capture knives were not well understood. This legislation makes some further changes, but I think we acknowledge that there has been a growing problem in our community with violence being caused by people using knives, a lot of concern about knives in schools and some very recent tragic events in that regard. So this legislation makes it clear where there are exemptions in respect of knives, what knives are banned and what knives are restricted. Certainly, knives are already banned in public places unless there is a legitimate requirement for them. We as a community have to address this issue. We have to take a strong stand against any violence through whatever measure people are using. We have to stand against any climate of fear and to ensure our communities are safe.

The issue of laser pointers has been raised. A lot of people will say that laser pointers are used in daily life and that they would be innocuous in most circumstances. Unfortunately, these amendments are an example of where the abuse of laser pointers by a few people has necessitated legislation around the use of laser pointers so that they are restricted to where there is a legitimate use for them. There have been some really nasty examples where laser pointers have been used to try to blind the eyes of pilots as they land planes. That is quite wicked. Certainly, I would urge anyone who is aware of people who seek to do this to not keep a cone of silence around such offences. This is extremely dangerous. There are many things that people can use as weapons—for example, children or adults throwing stones from overpasses onto cars which has ended in tragedy. We have seen laser pointers pointed at planes. The intention of this amendment is to clamp down on the abuse of this particular object. That is unfortunate, because in most cases people would have these laser pointers for innocuous purposes. But this is a change that has come about because of the abuse of laser pointers by a few.

I want to address a disturbing exchange that occurred earlier in this chamber when one of the Labor members attacked a colleague of mine, the member for Mudgeeraba. I thought this was a cowardly act and one which certainly sought in a most offensive way to attack my colleague—who was, as I understand it, with her son who is in the military and was commemorating a family member's achievements in the military—in regard to a photo that was taken. I think that we need to respect that there are families that quite rightly stand strongly behind their children who are in the military who need support. We do not want this hysterical language from Labor members about members of the military supported by their families. The military, by the nature of what they do, happen to have weapons for the protection of this country. We must understand that they have a legitimate role in this country. The language that we heard from that Labor member I thought was cowardly and was designed to be a political attack that was wrong and offensive.

Other issues have been raised by my colleagues in relation to other details of this legislation. We welcome the further explanations that have been sought from the minister in this regard. Once again I thank my colleague, the member for Surfers Paradise, for the work that he has done in this regard and those who have taken part in the consultation. At the end of the day we want to ensure that people have a voice and that good, fair and law-abiding citizens are listened to.