




Speech By
Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE

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**FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES (DOMESTIC SMOKE ALARMS)
AMENDMENT BILL; FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES (SMOKE ALARMS)
AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (10.03 pm): I am pleased to rise this evening to speak in support of the government's Fire and Emergency Services (Domestic Smoke Alarms) Amendment Bill 2016. The Queensland community is very aware of the dangers of house fires. The electorate of Woodridge in the broader city of Logan has unfortunately had more than its fair share of fires in recent years. However, there has been a strong community effort in the city of Logan to raise awareness of the dangers of fire and support those who have survived a fire.

Five years ago, as almost every speaker in this debate has mentioned, there was a tragic fire in Slacks Creek, very close to the Woodridge electorate. In that fire 11 people, including eight young people and children, tragically lost their lives.

I want to recall the contribution made by the minister. I commend the minister for his work on this important legislation before the parliament. In his second reading speech the minister said that there have been 93 house fire related deaths in Queensland since 2010. Every house fire has the potential to cause deaths. If I can speak here about the Woodridge electorate, from the date of the Slacks Creek fire until the start of this year there were 178 house fires in the Woodridge electorate. Every one of those fires had the potential to kill. That is what the minister said. I reiterate those statistics tonight. This is an important legislative measure that will make Queensland safer and protect Queenslanders against fire.

Following the inquest held after that terrible fire, the coroner concluded that all residential accommodation should be fitted with photoelectric smoke alarms instead of ionised smoke alarms, and the parliament moves this legislation through the House tonight to ensure that occurs. The coroner stated in his report—

I find also that had the smoke alarms been working there was a reasonable prospect that some or all of the victims could have escaped.

The fire was a terrible event, and we as a parliament must ensure some good comes from it. The coroner's report made several recommendations, which have all been accepted by the government. I make it clear: all of the recommendations made by the coroner conducting the inquest have been accepted by the government. That is a very significant and substantial difference between the position the government takes on this matter and the position taken by the members of the LNP opposition. Those recommendations are being implemented through the government bill being considered by the parliament tonight so that hopefully events such as that particular house fire in Slacks Creek in which 11 people died can be avoided.

The bill applies various time frames for the implementation of photoelectric smoke alarms that are interconnected, with a longer transition before it applies to all housing in Queensland. Of course, there is nothing to stop any householder in Queensland installing smoke alarms in their own house, and hopefully many will take that step on their own initiative, of their own volition. Certainly government members will be promoting this in the community. I echo the words of the member for Waterford. Certainly this will be promoted by all of the government members in the city of Logan: the member for Logan, Linus Power, who is in the House the evening; the member for Waterford, who earlier in the debate spoke at length and with some poignancy about the fire in Slacks Creek; the member for Algester; and of course the member for Springwood, the Minister for Housing and Public Works. The member for Springwood has a very significant role to play in the implementation of this legislation.

All of the Labor government members of Logan are united to ensure that no-one, if it is at all possible, should suffer the horrific outcome of a house fire. We are working together on that. We have conducted family house fire awareness days to ensure families are aware of the risk of house fires. The member for Waterford and I were pleased to hold one in Logan Central last year. It was attended by the member for Logan. We will continue our campaign, united in Logan, to ensure no-one suffers as a result of a house fire.

Queensland is not on its own in implementing this sort of legislation. Several cities in the US have implemented photoelectric-only legislation, while the state of Ohio has also enacted photoelectric-only legislation. I think the implementation time frames set out in the government bill are, on balance, sensible in all of the circumstances. Over the period of time set out in the government's proposed legislation the government will run a comprehensive awareness campaign to encourage households to comply with the requirements and to promote the development of escape plans.

Installing smoke alarms in bedrooms and making sure that these are connected to all other alarms in the house means that people who are asleep in a home can be alerted to a fire in other parts of the house. The interconnection of photoelectric smoke alarms is an absolutely critical part of this government bill before the House. It is a very substantial and significant difference between what the government seeks to do in the parliament and the members opposite. Frankly, I have not heard any cogent argument against interconnection other than it may be more costly. What cost can any of us in this parliament put on a human life? To take the words of the member for Chatsworth, he said that the harder the law the less effect it has. It is not that we want hard laws; it is that we want the best law for the people of Woodridge, the people of Logan and the people of Queensland. Interconnection is absolutely critical to ensuring the people of Queensland have the best laws which ensure the highest and best safety for them. Independent analysis shows that photoelectric smoke alarms are much faster at detecting smoke than other alarms.

I also want to talk about some of the initiatives in the city of Logan. One effect of the terrible house fire in the city of Logan in Slacks Creek was that it set people in Logan asking what they could do to stop such a tragedy occurring again as well as helping people cope with fires after they have occurred. In that spirit and like so many members in the House tonight on both sides of the chamber—and I think it is a credit to all members in this parliament, regardless of the political party that they represent—all members in this chamber have commended the great work of Louie and Christine Naumovski who realised that after that tragic fire there was a need for a support group for people whose houses have been destroyed by fire. They formed the Logan House Fire Support Network, which has been mentioned as well tonight, which does wonderful work in the city of Logan looking after people who have lost their homes, their possessions, everything after a fire. They realised that the hours and days immediately after a fire are crucial for families in particular and they provide help to local families, particularly in the city of Logan, who have been devastated by house fires to ensure that no family feels isolated, as I have said in the parliament previously, alone and lost in their time of need.

Recently I was delighted to be able to provide the Logan House Fire Support Network with a decommissioned Queensland ambulance for use for its important service. Louie has told me that the donation will help the network help victims of fire by being able to carry much of the emergency items people need immediately after a fire and it provides a protective shield for those family members who may have lost everything in a fire when they arrive at the scene of a fire. I just want to say this about Louie and Christine: they represent the best of the city of Logan. They represent the sort of community that Logan is—one in which people look out for each other. I strongly support the work done by Louie and Christine and acknowledge their contribution to the important legislative measure before the House tonight. I urge all members of the parliament to support the government bill.