




Speech By
Tarnya Smith

MEMBER FOR MOUNT OMMANEY

Record of Proceedings, 25 February 2016

LEGAL AFFAIRS AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE REPORT

Motion to Take Note

 **Mrs SMITH** (Mount Ommaney—LNP) (12.00 pm): I rise today as a member of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee to make a few comments on the report that has been tabled. I concur with the member for Beaudesert in relation to the great work of the secretariat that has gone into this report. The committee attended public hearings across the state. I agree with the member for Beaudesert that there was not a lot of groundswell from the public in relation to this matter. The member for Capalaba commented on the fact that no-one turned up to give information at the public hearings at Mount Isa and Weipa so clearly it did not arouse a lot of interest. I do need to put that into context. In Cairns one gentleman turned up on behalf of his father in relation to a vehicle that was purchased in 2000. As the member for Beaudesert said, while the number of people impacted may be small they certainly were affected by their vehicles being what is known as a lemon and we saw the distress that it did cause people.

The Australian Consumer Law came into effect in 2011 and this is why the non-government members came to our members' comment, which I will raise very shortly. As members can see from the report, there were nine recommendations made that involved tidying up a few minor issues that could give consumers better protection. There needs to be a national approach and hopefully this will be the starting point of Queensland's contribution.

As the member for Mansfield said, the non-government members of the committee made this comment—

The non-government members of the committee are mindful of the importance of consumer protection measures, however this should be balanced with the extent of the issue, the importance of a national approach to the issue and not setting up additional regulation and bureaucracy that isn't necessary.

Why did we come to that conclusion? If members go to pages 70, 71 and 72, out of the 11 people who submitted in regard to vehicle issues that they had, only five fell into the category of after 2011 once the consumer laws had come into place. Out of those five, two people were still pursuing action. Because of this, on balance we did not see the need to have regulations and bureaucracies set up. We considered the impact on people of additional regulation and bureaucracy. We very much supported the idea that where people are taking action through QCAT maybe the limit should be increased to compensate for any out-of-pocket expenses that people incur.

At the end of the day the report is very well balanced. We need to balance the need with the consumers issue and how much that comes to light. I again very much thank the secretariat for the research and work they did to provide us with a better understanding of this issue. Whilst the number of people impacted is small, the issue does have an impact on people's lives.