




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

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**TRANSPORT OPERATIONS (ROAD USE MANAGEMENT) (OFFENSIVE
ADVERTISING) AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (4.52 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) (Offensive Advertising) Amendment Bill. In so doing I commend the Minister for Main Roads, Hon. Mark Bailey, and the Attorney-General, Hon. Yvette D'Ath, for their work on this bill. I thank the many activists and the members of the committee. When I talk about the activists I think about Wicked Pickets who are led by the rather fierce and wonderful Anna McCormack and others who have been so tenacious in their efforts to speak out on this important issue. I had the pleasure of meeting the activists behind Wicked Pickets in July 2015 when I attended a rally they had organised in Brisbane calling for action against the misogynistic, racist and insulting slogans on campervans that we know as Wicked Campers. I was proud to lend my support to Wicked Pickets' aims to have the awful slogans painted on Wicked Campers off our streets and I was happy to do what I could to assist.

At the rally I received a petition that Wicked Pickets had prepared on behalf of the Queensland Minister for Women, Hon. Shannon Fentiman. I would like to acknowledge the advocacy of Minister Fentiman who wrote to the owner of Wicked Campers expressing her deep concern at the blatant use of imagery and slogans that condone violence against women and perpetuate the culture and attitudes that lead to violence. Minister Fentiman, like so many thinking Queenslanders, understands why it is important that objectification and stereotyping of women is not accepted, especially when displayed by a commercial organisation on our public roads where we have to look at it whether we like it or not.

I was happy to lend my support as a proud feminist, mother of a proud feminist, sister of a proud feminist, cousin of a proud feminist and aunt of a proud feminist. Like many I have been appalled at the crass and vile slogans painted on Wicked Campers and, like many, I cannot fathom why anyone would want to do such a thing. Certainly no-one I knew was laughing. In the context of growing statistics of violence towards women, these vans with their slogans and images are particularly concerning. What this company fails to appreciate is that violence against women exists on a spectrum. At one end there are misogynist attitudes which this company champions. Their insulting, denigrating, belittling statements, slogans and images disguised as humour make most of us feel uncomfortable and angry because they are being told against the backdrop of a society that systematically denigrates women. The basic premise of these slogans assumes women enjoy being downtrodden or made fun of because of their gender. Furthermore, it assumes that our society enjoys seeing women objectified and made fun of because of their gender. What is concerning is that we all know that misogynistic attitudes are the building blocks for more extreme forms of violence against women that are endemic in this country, including forced sex, emotional, psychological and financial abuse, revenge porn, physical violence, stalking, rape and murder.

We know that two Australian women on average are killed every week. Some are targeted in seemingly opportunist acts like the case of teacher Stephanie Scott, allegedly abducted by a cleaner at her school just days before she was due to be married, but many more are killed by people they know well: husbands, partners and fathers. As more people become aware of the extent of violence against

women there are growing calls for action. For this reason it is necessary for responsible and progressive governments to make a stand against this type of gross arrogance and its pathetic attempts at humour and its complete disregard for appropriate standards regardless of the lame objections which the owner of the company has bleated out regularly on social media.

It is worth noting that the owner of Wicked Campers has a long history of threatening and intimidating people who criticise his slogans. In 2008, when former Queensland premier Anna Bligh criticised him for a racist slogan, he responded with a painting of the naked premier on one of his vans inviting the mainstream media to take photographs. This reaction is despicable on two levels: it insults women in general and it is completely disrespectful to the position of premier of our state. One wonders if pictures denigrating a male politician would be considered as clever by this person. Then in the same year journalist Lucy Clark publicly criticised the owner for his slogans. Her punishment for speaking out was to have a personalised slogan written on the side of a van which incited violence against her. The van was then driven to where Ms Clark lived and driven around the town before returning to Brisbane. I call this harassment. The person responsible saw it as a rational response to criticism.

I am pleased to say that the Palaszczuk government is taking this matter seriously. The bill before the House today is designed to ensure that Queensland registered vehicles will no longer be allowed to be on the road displaying obscene, sexist, racist or otherwise offensive advertising. While it is true that almost all advertising that appears on vehicles is perfectly legitimate and a necessary part of good business, there are some, like Wicked Campers, who systematically flout Advertising Standards Bureau rulings when it comes to the standards Queenslanders are prepared to accept. We know that when the ASB finds a particular ad to be unacceptable, using its internationally recognised and approved best practice model to do so, the advertiser cooperates immediately to remove or modify the offending ad. In many ways it is a method of self-regulation and for the most part works very well, but it does rely on cooperation because if an advertiser, as is the case with Wicked Campers, chooses not to comply, the ASB has no powers to enforce its ruling. This bill before us seeks to address this. This bill provides that Queensland registered vehicle holders who fail to comply with an ASB determination will face the prospect of having the registration of the offending vehicle cancelled. This is good legislation and delivers on the Palaszczuk government's commitment in a pragmatic, fair and measured way. Government can only go so far.

As a community, as a country, we have a responsibility to every Australian woman to say that she deserves to be able to live free from humiliation and denigration, free from violence as she goes about her daily life. As researcher Sandi Scaunich reported in the *Age*, women are asked to bear the responsibility of preventing their own assaults, rapes and murders and navigate their safety through a set of conscious or unconscious protective behaviours. Some people, perhaps the owner of Wicked Campers, may not be familiar with the habitual acts that women undertake on a daily basis to protect themselves because he was born into the lucky portion of society who generally do not have to check the back seat of the car before driving off. The thing about people who enjoy certain privileges is that they do not realise they have them.

We need to tell society that it is a place for women, they are allowed to walk the street, they are allowed to have their own time and they are allowed to dress as they please. We will never, ever accept that women are to blame for the violence inflicted upon them. We need to change the culture and I firmly believe that this legislation is a step towards achieving that. I am proud to support this bill and I commend it to the House.