




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT

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

 **Mr MOLHOEK** (Southport—LNP) (3.34 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) (Offensive Advertising) Amendment Bill 2016. At the outset, I want to thank the committee secretariat for their hard work in arranging the hearings and briefings in the short time frame, particularly given that Christmas and New Year were in the middle. I also acknowledge the work of the committee members. I can assure the House that the review that we conducted was robust. There were a lot of very difficult questions asked of the submitters and the department during the course of the hearings. I am satisfied that, in the main, we have addressed the main challenges that have been highlighted through this legislation.

I would like to talk a little about some of the submissions we received, particularly given that this morning in the House the LNP introduced a private member's bill to toughen up bail provisions and other matters in respect of domestic violence. It is interesting to note that a lot of the submitters had a lot to say about the impact the inappropriate use of slogans and messaging on vehicles has on shaping the minds of our young people.

The submission from YFS shared some data from a survey that was conducted. They provided interesting commentary. I think it appropriate that I read a little from their submission. This organisation has developed a program around educating young people about the need for respectful relationships. The curriculum has been developed and trialled in Victoria. They see this particular program as an important step forward in the prevention of domestic violence and in encouraging behavioural change amongst young people aged 12 to 20 years.

In their submission they went on to say that they have used evidence from the national plan to support Queensland's groundbreaking *Not now, not ever* report. They fully endorse the desire of the government to encourage respectful attitudes towards women and to discourage the sexual objectification of women and girls. They see that some of the messaging that we accept in our society is not particularly helpful.

The results of a survey they conducted of 3,000 young people two years ago indicated that one in six 12- to 24-year-olds believe that women should know their place and that one in three believe that exerting control over someone is not a form of violence. More than a quarter of those young people also believed that male verbal harassment and pressure for sex towards females were normal practices.

Clearly, they are not respectable practices. Quite clearly, from the evidence that was presented during the public hearings and the private briefings—and as the member for Kallangur quite rightly indicated before—it would be inappropriate to read out some of the slogans on those offending vehicles. I would suggest to the House that the slogans and messages that are being inappropriately displayed on many of these vans are doing anything but enforcing or reinforcing respectful behaviours from young people, particularly towards women and young girls.

This legislation is not just about cleaning up the image or appearance of these vans; it is about making a very strong statement in our society. This morning the Leader of the Opposition talked about the fact that it is time that we really made a very strong stand on this issue. The time for talk is over. It is time for action.

I believe that, in supporting this bill, we are sending the strongest possible message to those many women and girls and, in some cases, young men and adult men who have been sexually harassed or been victims of domestic violence and the people of Queensland that we do not support disrespectful behaviour or attitudes towards members of the opposite sex. I believe that this legislation is particularly important.

I want to quote briefly from a couple of the other submissions. There was concern expressed around the need to do more than just simply deregister vehicles. One of the concerns—and the shadow minister for transport highlighted this earlier—we had was whether this action would be strong enough and how realistic it would be for us to enforce that action, particularly given that many of the vehicles are registered interstate. I would at least concede that it is a step in the right direction. It is a cost and a risk that commercial operators do not need, but we have to start somewhere. I believe that by starting here we are sending a very strong message to the industry that we are serious about cleaning up this sort of marketing.

Some of the other concerns expressed were in reference to the Advertising Standards Board's basis for review. Some concern was raised about the fact that sometimes their reviews can be too subjective. Sometimes they err on the side of being flippantly in favour of sexist or offensive comments. Concern was raised by one of the submitters that, using the definitions that ASB currently use, many of the complaints about the vans may end up being overlooked or dismissed as being frivolous. My hope is that the ASB and the operators of these vans will get a very clear message from the Queensland parliament today—that is, we are over the frivolous responses to the community expectations. What we have heard very clearly through this process is that the community wants us to raise the bar. They want us to set a higher standard. They want us to stand up for our kids and for our families. They want us for this time and this generation to make a very strong statement around issues of sexual harassment and the sexual exploitation of women.

We also had a submission from the Australian Christian Lobby. Wendy Francis, the Queensland representative of that organisation, continues to be a strong advocate for families and for family values in Queensland. It was particularly pleasing to see that they were there to present and also to support the position being proposed by this legislation. I should point out that it was actually the LNP during its last term in government that initiated the need to conduct some sort of review around advertising standards generally. Even though this bill is an important step forward, there is so much more to be done. I realise that it is a can of worms. It is a highly subjective area of review.

There were concerns expressed in this House in the last term of government about billboards on entry to the Gold Coast that one particular nightclub ran that simply said, 'Welcome to sin city.' I am not sure that that is the sort of image of our cities that we want to portray. Some of the associated imagery that we see across the state in promoting other forms of entertainment is perhaps not the standard that we want either. My hope is that this will be the beginning of a revolution in Queensland and that, as a state, we will set higher standards—that we will send a much stronger message to those visitors and tourists who come to Queensland, who perhaps have come from other countries where the standards are already higher than ours—that we are a decent society, that we have values that are worth upholding and particularly that we will not tolerate inappropriate attitudes towards women and young girls.

Among the submissions we also heard from FamilyVoice. They simply raised some concern about whether the legislation and some of the definitions within the legislation may have some unintended consequences. In seeking to nail down what is decent and what is acceptable in terms of advertising or marketing methodology, they had a concern that perhaps it would open up a Pandora's box for other organisations to shut down more appropriate messaging, perhaps messaging that reinforces family values. In the committee review we asked a lot of questions of the department to make sure that those unintended consequences were not likely and that the bill as proposed is quite targeted and very specific in seeking to deal with the issues.

I also wanted to pick up a few comments from Micah. I want to acknowledge Karyn Walsh, who is the head of Micah Projects here in Brisbane. She is a remarkable woman. The work that Micah Projects do here in Brisbane and across the south-east in terms of supporting many marginalised groups—supporting the homeless and supporting people with significant disability and disadvantage—is incredible. To have Karyn come to the public hearing and want to speak about this issue I thought was a real reflection of the character of the lady. I want to honour her in the House today.

Micah Projects made a few comments in their submission and I want to share them. They are a matter of public record. In their submission they said, 'It's no laughing matter.' The demeaning of women is not a laughing matter. Micah quoted comments like, 'I've often wanted to drown my troubles, but I can't get my wife to go swimming,' along with 'We are coming for your daughters,' or 'Dear Lucy, I can already imagine the gaffer tape on your mouth.' These are just some of the 300-odd comments that were submitted to us during the hearing. It is right that Micah would highlight the complete and utter inappropriateness of this sort of advertising or marketing supposedly in the spirit of good fun—'Hang loose and have a great time'—and in the spirit of having a semi-casual reckless holiday driving around the state sending out those messages. I am sure that there is no-one in the House here today who would disagree that this is an important piece of legislation in terms of dealing with this issue.

What is incredibly sad though is that we even have to do this. There was a time when it would never have occurred to corporations that it was appropriate to try to profit from the exploitation of women or from the sexualisation of their advertising messages. Micah says that 'there is nothing funny' about the messages on Wicked campervans that primarily run around Byron Bay and up the Queensland coast.

I think that some of the slogans in the submissions we have received during the hearings really say it all. The couple of concerns that we raised—and these will be challenges for the transport minister as he seeks to deal with some of the amendments and come back with the final draft—were to look at the regime of checking the vehicles and how enforceable that will be and the frequency of that. We raised some concerns around the frequency because some of these vans are quite old. The other challenge for the government will be not only how rigorous and enforceable the rules will be based on the fact that we are requiring the Advertising Standards Board to make a ruling as to decency but also that we are asking the department to take action, and then in some cases the vehicles will come from interstate.

There are some challenges there. At least this is a great step forward. I believe that we are sending a very strong message to the rest of Australia and to organisations like Wicked about how serious we are with the measures that we have undertaken in respect of violence towards women and the standards of decency that we are hoping and longing to see reinstated in our state to protect our women and our kids.