




Speech By  
**Hon. Grace Grace**

**MEMBER FOR MCCONNEL**

---

Record of Proceedings, 8 March 2018

### **TOW TRUCK AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations) (12.00 pm): I am pleased to speak in support of the Tow Truck and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. For far too long members of my community, whether they are residents or visitors, have been victimised by rogue or cowboy tow truck operators, particularly in the inner city of Brisbane. People in my electorate have emailed me about their experiences. They have expressed confusion, frustration and irritation about practices of tow truck operators, including excessive fees, exorbitant release fees and, of course, outrageous storage charges. Around the Fortitude Valley area in my electorate is a particular hotspot for complaints. To put it bluntly, the rip-offs have to stop.

Industries often complain about red tape. Self-regulation, in my mind, generally does not work. This industry is completely out of control. I have to confess that one night I got caught myself in Fortitude Valley. I was attending a meeting. I know my area extremely well.

**Mr Minnikin:** What were you doing?

**Ms GRACE:** I will take that interjection from the member for Chatsworth wondering what meeting it was. It was one of my local meetings. It was being held in the Fortitude Valley area. I parked in the car park of a business that was not open. It was late at night. I was rushing, going from one meeting to another. Members know what it is like. There was a sign but it was not clear. When I came back 15 to 20 minutes later the car had been towed. I realised then that the sign next door applied to the premises where I was parked as well. When I called the tow truck operator there was no leniency given whatsoever.

The tow truck operator told me where they were located. I had to get there. I was stranded. They did not accept any credit cards, EFTPOS or electronic funds transfers. It was cash and cash only. They wanted \$650 on the spot to release my car. I cannot tell you what the taste in my mouth was like when I handed over that \$650. My husband, Michael, had to come and pick me up. We had to go to the ATM and draw the money out. We had to go over to Newmarket to the storage facility and pay \$650 in cash to get my car out. I really had only been parked there for about 20 minutes. I am not saying that everyone who parks where they should not does the right thing, but this was ridiculous.

I commend the minister for listening to the community. I echo the contribution of the member for Logan that this is a balanced approach to fixing this problem. There were a number of amendments that could have been included in the bill, but I think this bill takes a balanced approach. It is interesting that when the government started taking about wanting to regulate this industry the practices in my electorate subsided. It is almost like self-regulation in reverse. The tow truck operators know that regulation is coming. They know that the spotlight is on them. This situation has shown how self-regulation can fail in our community and how a bit of regulation, which sometimes we call red tape, helps the community.

One of the important changes in the bill relates to the capping of the towing storage and on-site release fees. I know that members of my community will welcome the certainty this will bring. We were hearing stories such as the one about a group of young women who were enjoying a night out, there was a designated driver who was to take her friends home, and on returning to the car they found it had been towed away. This is a bunch of friends stranded in Fortitude Valley in the early hours of the morning with no way to get home.

Under this bill fees for standard tows are capped at \$250, which includes 72 hours of storage, with subsequent storage capped at a maximum of \$25 a day. That is a balanced figure. It is a lot better than \$650 for 20 minutes! The caps will stop the exploitation. Cars will be taken to their nearest approved holding yard. Many times I saw members of the community arguing with a tow truck driver who had just pulled up to their car, started to put it on the tow truck but would not release it to the driver who just wanted to get home. These were young women, fathers and mothers who were then emailing my electorate office to express their utter frustration at this happening. All of these farcical scenes will stop and we will get order into the way this is done.

There were some dodgy practices. Signs were in grey areas. They would not allow you to pay in any way other than cash. There were clearly arrangements that had been made between the owners of the property and the tow truck operators when their businesses were closed. Because they are in a prime location there are spotters there and as soon as a driver pulls in they are towed away. There were arrangements that once the time was up in a limited parking area they would tow the car away. That was regardless of whether the business being visited kept the driver for more than the time limit. If a customer was visiting a hairdresser or a podiatrist they would be towed away as soon as that period was up. Clearly there were arrangements that were in place. As I said, most of the time the signage was not necessarily all that clear.

I welcome this legislation. I congratulate the minister. I think it is a balanced approach. I think tow truck licensing and driver accreditation requirements for private property towing is a step in the right direction. Although it is unlikely to affect most operators, it means that people, including those in my community, can have peace of mind that they are dealing with operators who are licensed and hold a towing consent. Once these arrangements are in place they will improve the circumstances that I have had to deal with for quite a number of years as a local member, police and transport officers can effectively resolve any matters that arise and it will ensure that rogue operators who want to make a quick buck can be stamped out.

Residents and visitors in the central Brisbane area will benefit from the proposed changes in this bill. I welcome the measures to regulate the towing industry. I would hate to come out of a late-night meeting or a Rotary dinner to find that I was stranded. I can imagine how those young people who were visiting my area felt. The actions taken by the minister in this bill fill me with pride. It is a great Palaszczuk Labor government initiative. I welcome the measures to regulate the towing industry. I commend the bill to the House.