




Speech By
Aaron Harper

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

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SUMMARY OFFENCES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (4.33 pm): I rise to speak on the Summary Offences and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. We know that the safety of Queensland's first responders, including police, fire, ambulance and emergency services personnel, is absolutely paramount. I think I can speak with a degree of authority after 28 years with the Queensland Ambulance Service. Whilst I cannot claim to have responded to these particular incidents, I can draw comparisons with some workplace incidents or cutting people out of cars. When have you emergency responders close to cutting tools, you can be put in a situation where you are quite apprehensive. I do feel for the personnel who put themselves in harm's way when responding to calls for service.

The government is taking action to ensure the safety of emergency services workers and individuals planning to use dangerous attachment devices. These laws are important, and they have been specifically designed to protect people who often put themselves in harm's way to protect the community. There has been an increase in the use of potentially dangerous attachment devices in recent protest activities. One of the things I am concerned about during these protests is when an ambulance receives a call for service for a heart attack, a stroke, a person having a seizure or when a child is struck by a car and there are potential delays getting to those jobs. I think these laws are very valid.

The member for Clayfield said we were 'soft on crime'. He rolled out the usual lines and continued in a lengthy contribution about their track record. The track record of the Rapid Action Patrol group in Thuringowa is that it was half staffed at 20. We delivered the other 20 and brought it to a fully staffed 40. We are opening a new police station in the Upper Ross as well. They sacked 300 police operatives in their time under the former Newman government, and I know that many of them had years of policing experience that went out the door. To stand there and say the LNP is able to demonstrate their track record when they have a very poor record and they should be remembered for what they did—

Mrs Frecklington: Eleven hundred police officers.

Mr HARPER: I take your interjection. The LNP has a shocking track record. These devices are known as sleeping dragons, dragon's dens, tripods and monopoles. Their removal often requires the use of specialist tools like angle grinders, cold-cut saws, hydraulic cutters, jackhammers and hammer drills. The use of this equipment close to a person's body presents a real risk of injury to first responders, protesters and anyone nearby.

Ian Leavers, president of the Queensland Police Union of Employees, said, 'These devices are putting people's safety at risk. These are good laws protecting front-line police.' Devices that are embedded with metal or other items can cause serious injury to the person attached to the device, emergency services workers, police and people nearby if the device is removed incorrectly or in haste. During the committee hearing Assistant Commissioner Brian Codd described these risks a little further. He said—

Glass can shatter, cutting or slicing the protester, police or emergency services workers, and wire can fragment and become a projectile. These are the things that we want to prevent from happening. Additionally, the presence of these types of objects may lead to the power equipment failing. Cold cut saws can kick back ...

I have seen what happens when an angle grinder is used and it gets caught up. I attended cases in my former career where they have been embedded in the chest. The actual grinding disc explodes and then you have a major trauma on your hands. He continued—

... presenting significant risk of injury to a protester or an emergency services worker. Alternatively, a grinding disc rotating at thousands of revolutions per minute could fragment ...

Further, police described how devices with trip-wires or drums reinforced with concrete to obstruct rail lines and roads can cause serious injury or death if people are not removed from the rail line or the road. I was listening to the member for Mackay's contribution about what happened at Abbot Point, which is a place where I grew up. Pulling up a coal train is not easy. These are incredibly risky protests, with people putting themselves and those people responding at serious risk.

Unless transport infrastructure is stopped, a train driver faces a real risk of inadvertently running into a protester or a 44-gallon drum filled with reinforced concrete. This represents both a physical and a psychological risk, not only to the protesters but also to the employees and anyone else using transport services. Importantly, these proposed laws are designed to protect emergency services and members of the community without compromising the freedom and rights that our community expects. I will take a moment just to commend our emergency services workers who go out and do their job in often challenging and difficult circumstances.

This Labor government recognises the fundamental rights of every person to peacefully protest. It is one of the hallmarks of our democracy, along with the right to freedom of expression, the right to peacefully assemble and the right to freedom of association. The bill protects our police, our emergency services workers, our transport workers and the people of Queensland by acting to prevent the use of dangerous attachment devices in dangerous locations and situations, while ensuring the right to gather and protest peacefully is not compromised.

I want to take a moment to tackle the comments made by the member for Everton. He said the LNP were tough on crime and have tough laws. History will show that that is completely untrue. Failed boot camps equalled high recidivism rates, and the shadow police minister was quoted in the Toowoomba *Chronicle* just yesterday as saying they want fewer people incarcerated. The LNP are not tough on crime. The LNP pretend to be tough on crime, but in reality they are lightweights. The reality is that they are as soft as marshmallows on law and order and melt the moment they are challenged on any real, alternate policies. I commend the bill to the House.