




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BUDERIM

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SUMMARY OFFENCES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr MICKELBERG** (Buderim—LNP) (11.37 am): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Summary Offences and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. This bill is the government's response to protesters who disregard the law and place our first responders and community safety at risk. It is a response which has been much hyped. We saw the *Courier-Mail* front-page headline of 'Straight to jail: Premier to fast-track protester laws', which was frankly nothing short of a joke.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition described the government's approach yesterday as a misrepresentation, which it has been. On this issue, like so many others, Labor's approach has been to distort the facts and to vacillate, when all the public want and need is a strong response which addresses the core issues at hand. The public want a response that stops a small group of people who think they are above the law from engaging in a form of protest that is deliberately obstructive and designed to cause maximum disruption to the community as a whole.

Regardless of the legitimacy or otherwise of their arguments, the actions of Extinction Rebellion and the like do nothing to assist their cause. By diverting police resources and causing considerable disruption to ordinary Queenslanders, groups like Extinction Rebellion only serve to drive the majority of Queenslanders away from their cause. That some protesters are prepared to place our police and emergency services at risk through their actions illustrates how their self-righteous crusade is more about themselves than for the good of the majority of Queenslanders.

I support the right to lawful, peaceful protest, but with rights come responsibilities. Queenslanders should be able to stand up for issues that they believe in, but they should not place public safety at risk in doing so. When protesters do that, they should face the consequences of their actions.

This bill is an impotent response to an issue that threatens public safety and public order. What we have seen here is yet another piece of weak legislation that deals with only one of the tactics the protesters use. It is a piece of legislation that does nothing to address the chronic failure of Queensland's legal system, which should be holding recidivist offenders to account. It does nothing to target the organisers of these unlawful actions. It does nothing to ensure that Queenslanders are able to get to work and go about their business. It does nothing to stop serial protesters who flout bail conditions, and it does nothing to ensure that there are real consequences for those who break the law time and time again.

It is pretty clear that the community is getting increasingly frustrated at the actions of a few. Just last week we saw members of the public turn on Extinction Rebellion protesters who were seeking to disrupt rail commuters in London. Despite the fact that I disagree with the tactics used by protesters like Extinction Rebellion, I fear it is only a matter of time before a frustrated member of the Queensland public takes the law into their own hands with injury resulting to one of the protesters. It is the government's role to prevent exactly those circumstances from occurring.

I support the amendments proposed by the shadow minister for police. Those recidivist offenders who are convicted of multiple serious breaches of the law should be subject to mandatory jail time. The LNP's unlawful assembly offence would see repeat offenders penalised with a mandatory minimum

custodial sentence of a week. Similarly, the LNP's proposed changes to the Bail Act would seek to reverse the presumption of bail for offenders charged with unlawful assembly who commit an offence of a similar nature while on bail. The government's bill does not go far enough and will do nothing to stop the ongoing illegal actions of the protesters who have been plaguing Queensland streets.

As the member for Ipswich West stated in his contribution, this bill is 'very narrowly crafted' and specific. One might surmise that this weak response is due to the considerable division that exists within the government and the open dissent of their union masters. This divided and weak Labor government either cannot or will not take the necessary steps to protect public safety and deal with those who repeatedly disregard the law. I hold out hope that the government will support the LNP's amendments, which seek to do exactly what Labor have shown they cannot.

The public is sick and tired of the disruption caused by protesters repeatedly ignoring the law to further their own objectives. The actions of the few that place our emergency services and the public at risk are disrespectful and counterproductive. The time for government action has long passed. While the LNP will be supporting the measures proposed in this bill, more needs to be done. I call on Labor to listen to the voices of the quiet Queenslanders who just want to go about their business in peace. I ask Labor to support the amendments moved by the LNP.