




Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

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SUMMARY OFFENCES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (6.24 pm): I rise to speak to the Summary Offences and Other Legislation Amendment Bill and to offer my support for the amendments moved by the member for Toowoomba North. This bill, I might add, falls well short of what is required in the state at the moment. If we have a look at recent events and the recent activities of these protesters and extreme activists and the havoc they are wreaking across this state, then you appreciate that we need legislation that is a lot tougher than that put before the House today. Although I will not be opposing this bill, it must be said that this is yet another ‘thought bubble’ from this government. Like we have seen time and time again from this Labor government, this legislation is a knee-jerk reaction to the chaos unleashed in Brisbane in recent weeks by radical activist groups such as Extinction Rebellion.

The LNP supports the right to legal protest, but the LNP also supports the rights of hardworking Queenslanders to go to work. The LNP supports the rights of primary producers to legally operate their businesses. We support the rights of Queenslanders to move freely in cities and regional areas. What we have seen here in recent weeks—particularly in Brisbane, where they have glued themselves to roadways, blocked major thoroughfares and prevented everyday Queenslanders from going about their business taking kids to school and going to medical appointments—is designed to wreak havoc, and that is exactly what it has done. It has taken our emergency services workers, particularly police officers, away from their operational duties. They then have to baby-sit and put themselves at risk to remove these protesters. As we have already heard from other members here tonight, in some cases they have sustained injuries as a result of dealing with these protesters. For example, at Abbot Point some 12 months ago protesters locked themselves onto a conveyor belt. Through pure luck they were found before that conveyor belt started up. There could have been a tragic result for those protesters, and no-one should have to put themselves in the shoes of the workers who would have been forced to clean up that mess.

This legislation does not address those protesters who simply stand or sit on a railway line, and we heard from the Minister for Natural Resources about the time it takes to pull up a coal train and the repercussions when protesters block railway lines. We know they are doing it regularly, particularly in Central Queensland. When you realise that these protesters could go and sit on a railway line and not be covered by this legislation, you start to appreciate the shortfalls and shortcomings of this particular bill here before the House tonight.

It is a shame that I cannot talk about my private member’s bill. I know that is still in the system so I will not talk about that tonight. It highlights the fact there are shortfalls in relation to those protesters who go onto feed lots and abattoirs. This particular bill will not cover that activity. It will not pick up those extreme activists who disrupt lawful businesses and who wreak havoc on families and operations across this state. This bill will not apply in those circumstances. This legislation is aimed at one segment of what I call professional protesters. It does nothing to protect farmers. It does nothing to prevent ratbags from obstructing machinery on a mine site or putting their lives and others in danger by climbing onto machinery at a port, or those idiots who climb up trees as we saw recently at the Carmichael mine site.

I sought advice from the Queensland Police Service, and it cost a considerable sum of money, an estimated \$10,000, to get two protesters out of a tree. That is money Queensland taxpayers had to stump up to remove these protesters from a tree at a mine site.

This legislation does not cover that, so once again it highlights the shortfalls that it is trying to address. It is these failings that illustrate the need for the member for Toowoomba North's amendments. Let us talk about those sensible and practical amendments in more detail. Queenslanders have had enough of radical protesters throwing their lives into chaos, appearing in court and doing it all again the next day. That is why the LNP wants to see people who have been convicted of multiple breaches face mandatory jail time. We need to send a message to these protesters that what they are doing will not be tolerated in this state. We need to send a strong message that if they want to engage in those types of activities and cause that chaos and disruption, tie up police resources and put innocent lives at risk, then they will be held to account for their actions. The LNP's amendment recognises that if you want to cause chaos in the lives of Queenslanders you will face real punishment.

The other amendment moved by the member for Toowoomba North will also help to reduce repeat offences. The LNP's amendments would mean that an offender who is bailed after an unlawful assembly would have the presumption of bail reversed should they be charged with an unlawful assembly offence whilst on bail. That is reasonable. Let them face a magistrate and explain why they should be released from custody. Let them explain to a magistrate why the magistrate should trust them not to go out and simply repeat their actions and engage again in this unlawful activity.

Whilst I welcome the intention of the legislation to ensure the safety of our police officers and other emergency services workers, we must not forget those Queenslanders who work in primary industries, the natural resources industry and many other industries across this state. To limit this bill to people who choose to use a dangerous attachment device addresses only part of the problem that we currently face. The fact is that this legislation does nothing to address the very real threat that these illegal protest actions pose to Queenslanders and legitimate businesses. Despite official denials, it is obvious that these actions are hindering our emergency services, as bravely revealed by the QAS medical director.

I welcome the submission from the Queensland Law Society and in particular their view that we need to strike a balance between the right to peaceful protest and the right of a person to peaceably go about their business. That is exactly the balance that we must find. To find that balance we need to take real action, not just action on a small group of radical protesters. I will be supporting this legislation because it is a start, but we need to go a lot further when it comes to addressing protest actions and activities across this state. I urge all members to support these important amendments and this bill before the House. As we have seen in recent weeks, we cannot continue to have these protesters holding this state to ransom. The time to act is now.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Stewart): Member for Burdekin, before you sit down, there was some unparliamentary language in there and I ask you to withdraw.

Mr LAST: I withdraw.