




Speech By
Hon. Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR MCCONNEL

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SUMMARY OFFENCES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations) (11.42 am): I rise to support the Summary Offences and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. In this House we often refer to our electorates. We all believe that our electorates are the best electorates in Queensland, but I can honestly say that members should not come in here and claim things that are incorrect: McConnel is actually the best electorate in Queensland! I am fortunate to have the CBD in my electorate, which is obviously where most protests are held. The CBD, which is geographically in McConnel, is where protests occur, and that is what normally happens in capital cities. They tend to use the centres of capital cities. I am very proud of Brisbane and very proud to be the member.

There is no doubt in my mind that the right to protest is sacred in any democracy. I adopt the previous words of the Premier, who spoke of the sensible middle ground we are adopting with this piece of legislation. We all know that peaceful protests are supported by both sides of the House, but it sends chills up my spine when I listen to the contributions of some of those opposite because they can never take the middle ground. They always go too far, and that is their problem. That is what we have seen under National governments in the past. To anyone who says our amendments are going back to the days of Bjelke-Petersen—I have had experience of those times—I can gladly say this is going nowhere near that.

It is the manner in which those opposite rise in this House and say, 'We're going to stop this! We're going to get tough!' I heard the member for Everton and the member for Buderim say, 'We're going to stop this!' If anybody in this House of all colours of government honestly thinks they are going to stop people protesting in relation to their legitimate concerns, they are kidding themselves. If they think that locking them up and throwing away the key is going to do that, they are kidding themselves. Yet they come in here talking tough as if they are the ones who are going to stop anybody out on the street, peaceful or not, protesting for what they believe is their cause.

There are many causes people protest that I agree with and support and there are many I do not, but I will rise in this House every day to defend their right to do so. Those opposite can never find the middle ground, and every Queenslander should be afraid if they are ever elected again to this side of the House. They take extreme measures, as demonstrated by the speeches of various members. None more so than when I was in the House yesterday listening to the member for Everton say, 'You think you're tough on protesters? Well, we're even tougher! You can't stop it as a government. We're going to stop them!' These are absolutely ridiculous statements that hold no fundamental truth in a democracy. If those opposite stand up and say that and actually believe it, Queenslanders should be very afraid of them being elected ever again into government because they are not fit to govern!

Over the years important issues have been brought to the forefront of people's minds because of lawful protests, and there are many around the world at the moment. You may or may not agree with the protests that are happening in Hong Kong, London, Santiago and Paris over various domestic and international issues. As I said, I was around during the realm of the Bjelke-Petersen government. I think

a few photographs of me were found in Special Branch files. That is what we get from those opposite; they are always extreme. Do you know why? It is in their DNA to stop people peacefully protesting and raising issues. Lord help us if they are ever again seated on this side of the House.

Technology changes and things change. When I started protesting there were no mobile phones. Nobody rang me to say, 'We're meeting over here.' It was all done in a different way. We now have mobile phones, smart watches and iPads. People communicate differently and they are very nimble. This legislation reflects those kinds of tactics. The reason we are introducing this legislation is for the health and safety of our first responders and, as the Premier said, for free movement in emergency situations.

I have protested most of my life. I joined the tens of thousands of public servants who were out the front here when Campbell Newman was elected. He told public servants they had nothing to fear and then went about sacking 14,000 full-time-equivalent public servants. I was in that protest with tens of thousands of people and we disrupted traffic on that day. I was proud to be part of it. It was peaceful. Can I honestly say that I have never, in all the time I was out protesting, seen any of these devices being used. I have never seen one during my career, and I organised protests in the street as the leader of the union movement. I have never seen them in bitter industrial disputes.

What I have often seen is that we are passionate and temperatures rise in different situations, but we try to calm them down in a peaceful way. If we are overstretching it, you will often find that leaders calm it down and bring it to a good point. This is a nonviolent part of doing that, but I can honestly say in this House that I have never actually seen one of these devices in use during my time. I am very proud of my background. It is often thrown at me by those opposite. I will never, ever deny my union background and the pride that I have in being a union member and the first woman elected to lead the union movement in this state. We were the ones who marched against you guys when you came in and sacked 14,000 public servants.

We have them in here from time to time crying crocodile tears because someone is not here. They get up every day in this House wanting one of us on this side to be sacked. That is all they are good for—cutting, sacking and selling and always going too far. What I believe now is that when we hear those opposite speak it is always a race to the bottom.

Opposition members interjected.

Ms GRACE: You can try to drown me out. They are all boys over there at the moment, all men. You can try to drown me out if you want but you will not succeed. None of you—no matter how many men you have on that side of the House. It is a disgrace that there is not one woman on that side of the House at the moment. They want to do nothing more than drown me out because they do not like what they are hearing. Well, you are going to hear it, because we have had to sit here and listen to your extreme measures. I am sure that other members will get up in here and talk about how tough they are going to be and they will flex their muscles and say that they are going to stop this and stop that. The reality is that you are not going to be able to do it. The reality is that you should be careful what you ask for.

Mr BOOTHMAN: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order under standing order 118 on relevance. What does this have to do with the bill?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Whiting): There is no point of order.

Ms GRACE: They do not like it. Now it is about relevance. We have heard some fairly irrelevant contributions from you lot during this debate, so just sit there and listen to it.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! We are getting too rowdy. Please put your comments through the chair. There will be no interjections designed to disrupt.

Ms GRACE: What I say often is to be careful what you ask for. If your amendments go through, you will have your own protest movements. Be careful what you ask for because it could come back to bite you. That is all I have to say in relation to this.

In relation to the opposition's amendments, I will gladly get up here and vote against them. This bill protects police, our emergency services workers, our transport workers and the people of Queensland by acting to prevent the use of these dangerous attachment devices—devices that I have not seen—and devices used in dangerous locations and situations, while ensuring our right to gather and protest peacefully is not compromised. I reject anyone who says we are going back to the Bjelke-Petersen days because it is not in our DNA—not as a Labor government, not as Labor Party members. It is not in our DNA; it is in the DNA of those opposite. I warn every Queenslanders: when they come back in, it is in their DNA and they will come back. Be careful what you ask for because you just might get it. I commend the bill to the House.