




Speech By  
**Scott Stewart**

**MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE**

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### **SUMMARY OFFENCES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (4.05 pm): As we have already heard, the Palaszczuk government is introducing new laws to ensure the safety of frontline emergency services workers and the broader community. In the interests of safety, this government has proposed new laws to make it an offence to use dangerous attachment devices. The new offences to be added to the Summary Offences Act are aimed at deterring unlawful and unsafe protest activity causing danger to emergency services workers and other members of the community, as well as to the protesters themselves.

I have just been to the Education Week afternoon tea, where I met with student leaders from Kelvin Grove state high school, now known as Kelvin Grove State College.

**Ms Boyd:** It's a great school.

**Mr STEWART:** It is a great school. It got me thinking back to the days when I attended that school. In 1982 we protested against Joh's anti-protest laws. It was probably before the member for Pine Rivers was born and probably when the member for Macalister was still in nappies. I remember a couple of friends and I went to see the principal to let him know that it was our intention to protest against Joh's anti-protest laws. He gave us two very clear instructions. The first thing he said was, 'You will not be wearing your school uniform.' The second thing he said was, 'You will not be arrested.' So away we went. In those days, the only device that we had was our voice and, boy, didn't we use it loud and proud.

However, there has been a change. In recent protest activity there has been an increase in the use of potentially dangerous attachment devices, as we all know. Those devices are known as sleeping dragons, dragon's dens, tripods and monopoles. Their removal often requires the use of specialist tools such as angle grinders, cold-cut saws, hydraulic cutters, jackhammers and hammer drills. The member for Macalister talked about how police are not trained in the use of such tools to remove those particular devices, so it can become very dangerous. The use of that equipment close to a person's body presents the real risk of injury to first responders, protesters and everyone else nearby. The risk is exacerbated by the way some attachment devices are now constructed, including where individuals have reinforced the devices with glass, wire, steel and other items.

Under the new laws, it will be an offence to use a dangerous attachment device to unreasonably interfere with the ordinary operation of transport infrastructure, unless a person has a reasonable excuse. Transport infrastructure can include busways, light rail, public marine, rail and road transport infrastructure, transport infrastructure relating to ports and active transport infrastructure such as bikeways. When responding to these proposed changes, the State Secretary of the Rail, Tram, and Bus Union, Mr Owen Doogan, said—

Let's face it, we've led our fair share of protests but we've never put people in danger of injury or death. These devices have the potential to derail or tip a train right over.

The penalty for using one of the devices will be up to two years imprisonment or a fine of nearly \$7,000. Under the Summary Offences Act, it will be an offence for a person to use a dangerous attachment device to stop a person from either entering or leaving a place of business. It will also be

an offence to cause a halt to the ordinary operation of plant or equipment because of concerns about the safety of a person. The maximum penalty for that offence will be 20 penalty units or one year's imprisonment. While it will not be an offence to possess a dangerous attachment device, police will be able to seize such a device before it can be used. Police will also be able to deactivate, disassemble and dispose—the three D's—of a dangerous attachment device.

It is both the design of these devices and the manner in which they are used which makes them dangerous. This includes the tools used in order to remove attachment devices—for example, angle grinders and cold-cut saws. They are dangerous pieces of equipment and the lack of injury thus far is due to the care and training of police when these devices are removed. The content of various devices can vary significantly—for example, the steel bars and glass used to reinforce the concrete used to construct a dragon's den. The make-up of these devices is evolving and ever changing. Police cannot be certain what has been placed in these devices. The location where these devices are used can vary—for example, on a rail line, roadway or other forms of infrastructure. The risk of public injury or death to a protester, a member of the public, emergency services workers or even train drivers is a real risk because of the location of the device.

Let me be clear, this is first and foremost about safety. It is about the safety of emergency services workers and the safety of individuals planning to use these devices. The Labor government will always support the right to protest. We will also act to keep our community safe. Perhaps the best device protesters can use—going back to the good old days—is their voice. I commend the bill to the House.