




Speech By
Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR HILL

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ADJORNMENT

Hit-and-Run Laws

 **Mr KNUTH** (Hill—KAP) (7.18 pm): There is overwhelming sentiment and outrage statewide about our weak hit-and-run laws. This outrage is demonstrated in two petitions calling for tougher penalties for hit-and-run offenders. One is from a family in my electorate who recently submitted their petition online calling for tougher penalties for hit-and-run offenders. This petition has attracted over 22,000 signatures. I ask members to imagine if their son or daughter was hit by a car and left to die at the side of the road while the offender simply drives away, not bothering to stop to see if their life could be saved. Then you find out that the maximum penalty for hit-and-run offences is 12 months—hardly an adequate penalty for taking a life or causing a serious injury. This is the situation faced by many Queensland families, including three cases that I know of in Far North Queensland.

Our state's hit-and-run penalties are the softest in Australia and we are allowing perpetrators to walk free. We are far behind other states such as New South Wales, the Northern Territory, Victoria and South Australia where hit-and-run penalties allow up to 10 years in prison if an incident causes death or seven years for serious injury. Tougher hit-and-run penalties will make drivers stop and think before leaving the scene of an accident. They will also act as a deterrent for those considering drink driving, driving while under the influence of a drug or driving while unlicensed or suspended. Hit and runs are viewed by Queenslanders as a cowardly act. Offenders show absolutely no regard for human life.

I want to acknowledge and thank the member for Barron River, who is also sponsoring a Queensland parliamentary petition to change outdated Queensland laws that allow hit-and-run perpetrators to walk free. Like me, the member's petition is calling for increased maximum penalties for drivers who fail to remain at the scene of a road accident and fail to assist an injured person. The petition also calls for those who fail to remain at the scene to be automatically deemed as driving while under the influence. Further to this, an offender's driver's licence would immediately be suspended and lost for incidents that result in grievous bodily harm or death. This is not an issue that should be fought along political lines or beliefs; it should be a bipartisan call for action to change the penalties for what is an obvious flaw in our sentencing laws for hit-and-run offenders. As I said, the overwhelming sentiment is that we need stronger penalties for hit-and-run offenders to save lives. We owe it to the families devastated by these tragedies.