




Speech By
Stephen Andrew

MEMBER FOR MIRANI

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SUMMARY OFFENCES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr ANDREW** (Mirani—PHON) (3.33 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Summary Offences and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I will acknowledge that this bill has been forced by a growing number of demonstrations that have caused to directly disrupt the two major industries that underpin my electorate—the coal and resources industry and the agricultural and grazing industry. Recent disruptions have maximised inconvenience and imposed a range of financial penalties on members of the wider public. The Peaceful Assembly Act 1992 effectively enshrines the people's right to peaceful demonstration. I will reiterate that the most important word is 'peaceful'. The right to peaceful assembly does not include shutting down major thoroughfares and then completely disregarding public safety and the rights and freedoms of others.

The dismantling of potentially dangerous attachment devices imperils police, fire and other emergency services as well as members of the general public who are in close proximity. Given that many dozens of protests have occurred over the last few years, there have been many hundreds of hours of delays to trains, the forced closures of ports and facilities and more recently a number of businesses have had to abandon entire days of work. The economic losses are not insignificant and for the agricultural industry having farm invaders running all over rural properties opens them up to all sorts of biohazard risks, including the African swine flu virus. Such events serve to do little towards adding credibility to so-called environmental campaigns.

This bill closes several gaps by defining a 'dangerous attachment device' and increasing police powers to search a person or vehicle without a warrant if a person is reasonably suspected by an officer to be in possession of a defined dangerous attachment device. The bill also allows an officer who finds a dangerous attachment device to deactivate, disassemble, seize and dispose of such devices and allows penalty infringement notices to be issued. I support this new legislation wholeheartedly.

As a part of the recent Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee public hearings, I was advised that there are no other realistic means of achieving the policy objective other than through legislative reform. However, I do recognise that protesters are a highly creative and imaginative lot and I suspect it will not be too long before further reactive legislation may become necessary and a review to this process. Nevertheless, we as legislators have been forced to act and address this rash of unreasonable and dangerous disruptions within our community and it is incumbent that the government takes whatever measures are required to maintain the safety and wellbeing of Queenslanders.