



Speech By
Joan Pease

MEMBER FOR LYTTON

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TOW TRUCK BILL

 **Ms PEASE** (Lytton—ALP) (4.18 pm): I rise today to speak to the Tow Truck Bill 2023. This bill represents a significant step forward in the Palaszczuk government's ongoing commitment to supporting vulnerable motorists and the tow truck industry. We have already heard many in the House talk about how vital this industry is in ensuring safety and efficiency on our roads. It is crucial to recognise the pivotal role that tow truck service providers play in clearing accidents and helping drivers and their vehicles return to safety. No doubt many South-East Queensland commuters would see tow trucks on the busy roads during peak hour. They are ensuring that traffic can flow freely by removing broken down vehicles or vehicles involved in incidents. This enables everyone to get to where they need to be on time.

I would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge Adam Lipke from Lipke Motors Smash Repairs. Adam is so much more than just a tow truck operator. Adam and his darling wife, Kylie, are very proud supporters and sponsors of the Wynnum Manly Juniors Rugby League Football Club, and Adam and his family have given many years of service to the club and have seen the club go from strength to strength. I would like to thank Adam for not only his work supporting local clubs but also the great work he does in the towing space.

Road traffic incidents are traumatic experiences and they can happen to anyone, regardless of their driving skills or precautions taken. We all rely on first responders in our time of need. I acknowledge the great work of the Queensland Ambulance and QFES people, but we should also take a moment to acknowledge tow truck drivers because they are also very often the first on the scene. It is in these moments of vulnerability that we must make sure our regulations offer maximum protection and support for anyone who is in that position.

Ensuring the safety and wellbeing of Queensland road users and the efficiency of our transport system is an extremely important role of government. The Tow Truck Bill 2023 is designed to strike a balance between public and road safety while also delivering improved outcomes and protections for motorists. This bill focuses on regulated towing services which involve the removal of vehicles damaged in crashes, vehicles seized by the police and vehicles from private properties in specific Queensland areas. These areas primarily cover high-population density regions, including South-East Queensland and major regional cities such as Cairns, Mackay, Bundaberg, Townsville and Rockhampton. In these locations, quick removal of vehicles involved in accidents is essential to restore normal traffic flow promptly. The tow truck system currently includes 97 tow truck business operators with around 1,200 drivers, 70 assistants and 670 tow trucks. They are pretty amazing numbers. The importance of a modern and efficient tow truck scheme cannot be understated.

In 2017, the Palaszczuk government initiated an independent investigation into the tow truck industry due to rising concerns about unfair and sometimes intimidatory practices regarding the removal of vehicles parked on private property. Subsequent reforms were introduced in 2018 to address these issues. However, the overall legislative framework governing tow trucks has remained largely

unchanged for decades. To ensure our legislation aligns with the evolving needs of the industry and public safety, the Department of Transport and Main Roads conducted a comprehensive review which aimed to simplify, clarify and target the legislation appropriately. The Tow Truck Bill 2023 is the result of this review. It seeks to protect the public by ensuring tow truck operators, in regulated towing, are safe, competent, professional and cost efficient for consumers. I know that that is what the public of Queensland wants and expects. This is achieved through various mechanisms such as criminal history checks, checks for scheme members before accreditation, clear requirements for each stage of the towing process and modernising terminology to refer to scheme members.

The bill also empowers authorised officers with necessary enforcement powers to ensure compliance, including entry into business premises when required. To balance these powers, the bill contains safeguards for accredited persons when compliance may lead to self-incrimination. The introduction of offences and penalties is a crucial aspect of the tow truck scheme as it deters noncompliance, clarifies undesirable behaviours and provides consequences for unlawful actions. These penalties also reflect the seriousness of the offences, ensuring best practice within the industry.

The Tow Truck Bill 2023 introduces new offences and penalties to provide further protection to vulnerable motorists. This includes making it an offence to use unauthorised tow trucks to tow vehicles, protecting passengers and their property. Additionally, there are specific offences for forging documents integral to the scheme and for using accreditation documents fraudulently. The bill also expands the list of notifiable offences that accredited persons must report to the chief executive, ensuring relevant offences are included while respecting privacy. Executive officers and partners within a partnership are also obligated to notify each other in the event of changes or convictions for notifiable offences. Furthermore, the bill provides grounds for ending, cancelling or suspending an accreditation, aligning it with other transport industry accreditation schemes and protecting the community. These provisions offer increased community protection without imposing unnecessary burdens on the industry.

In addition to strengthening regulations and penalties, the Tow Truck Bill 2023 streamlines administrative processes to make the industry more efficient. For example, it allows for temporary approvals of holding yards in an emergency situation, such as a flooding event, which will reduce the administrative burden on businesses during such times of crisis.

To support the new legislation, a tow truck regulation will be developed following the bill's passage to provide detailed operational requirements, ensuring flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances and to modernise operations.

This bill reflects the Palaszczuk government's dedication to delivering better services to the Queensland community, ensuring the integrity of our regulatory frameworks and ensuring people at a time of need are not going to be exploited and are well taken care of. It will establish a modern tow truck scheme that is responsive and safe and that ultimately delivers improved community outcomes. I commend the Tow Truck Bill to the House.