

Speech By

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CRIMINAL CODE (DANGEROUS DRIVING) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL; TRANSPORT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Ms BOURNE (Ipswich West—ALP) (5.37 pm): I rise to contribute to the cognate debate on the Transport and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2026 and Criminal Code (Dangerous Driving) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2026. As a member of the State Development, Infrastructure and Works Committee, I had the opportunity to examine both bills and to consider the evidence presented throughout the inquiry. Together, these bills propose significant changes relating to drug driving, dangerous driving, speeding, sentencing and other transport matters. There should be no argument in this House about the importance of road safety or the need to hold dangerous drivers accountable. In 2025, 69 lives were lost in crashes involving drug driving, while speeding contributed to more than a quarter of lives lost on Queensland roads.

Behind every statistic is a Queenslander who did not make it home and a family whose life has changed forever. Labor supports measures that genuinely make our roads safer and remove dangerous drivers from them; however, the committee process raised serious questions about whether aspects of these bills are fair, evidence based and workable in practice. One key concern was the evidence the government is relying on to justify these changes. The government resisted calls to release the 2023 drug-driving review, only to quietly publish it on 26 June. When Queenslanders finally saw it, perhaps it became clear why the government had been so reluctant. The review concluded that no legislative changes should be made. This government cannot have it both ways. It cannot point to a review when it suits its argument and then ignore the same review when its findings become inconvenient.

The cannabis and driving consultation report reinforced these concerns, with 95.86 per cent of respondents supporting changes to better accommodate medicinal cannabis users. We also heard concerns about mandatory minimum court imposed fines. Legal Aid Queensland warned these changes would remove the ability of a magistrate to hand down a lower fine in cases of either exceptional circumstances of the offence or extreme hardship. The Queensland Law Society similarly warned that two people may commit nominally the same category of offence while being in materially different circumstances. That is exactly the point. Magistrates hear the evidence, consider the circumstances and determine an appropriate penalty. We should be cautious about taking that discretion away.

There is also a broader question about whether tougher penalties alone will change behaviour. The RACQ told the committee that the proposed reforms would only be effective if drivers perceived a higher risk of being caught. The Queensland Homicide Victims' Support Group similarly noted that legislative reform alone will not reduce road trauma. The evidence deserves serious consideration. Safer roads require enforcement, education, safer infrastructure and appropriate penalties working together. Queenslanders ultimately want fewer crashes, fewer injuries and fewer families receiving the worst news imaginable.

One of the biggest concerns raised with me was what these changes could mean for Queenslanders legally prescribed medicinal cannabis. Let me be clear: no-one is arguing that someone who is impaired should be allowed to drive. The issue is whether presence necessarily means impairment. The Alcohol and Drug Foundation told the committee THC can remain detectable in saliva for several days after use, long after potential impairment has subsided. Someone could take medicinal cannabis exactly as prescribed, no longer be impaired and still return a positive test, facing penalties, including the loss of their licence, after the impairing effects have passed. Access to a licence is essential for many Queenslanders, particularly in outer suburban and regional communities where public transport can be limited. Patient advocate Debbie Ranson described medicinal cannabis patients as being forced into an impossible position: either take their legally prescribed medicine and risk losing their licence or forgo treatment to preserve their mobility and independence. No-one should have to choose between managing their pain and keeping their independence.

Then there are the changes to roadside drug testing. The Transport and Other Legislation Amendment Bill removes the second roadside saliva test before a sample is sent for confirmatory laboratory testing. That matters because research referenced by the MAIC/UniSC Road Safety Research Collaboration found that the two roadside testing devices did not consistently meet the recommended benchmark of greater than 80 per cent sensitivity and accuracy. Laboratory confirmation remains, but that does not explain why the government is removing an additional check while increasing penalties when concerns exist about the reliability of roadside devices. The government must also be transparent about the practical impacts. The committee's examination of the Criminal Code bill raised questions about the effect higher penalties and new sentencing provisions could have on the courts, watch houses and correctional facilities. Queenslanders deserve confidence that these reforms have been properly assessed and resourced.

The Transport and Other Legislation Amendment Bill also changes the way the Wave stage 3 can be delivered, giving the government greater flexibility over passenger transport arrangements, including by removing some existing protections around bus service contracts. Labor supports better public transport on the Sunshine Coast, but speed should not come at the expense of transparency or proper consultation. The Queensland Bus Industry Council warned that efficiency should not come at the expense of transparency, fair procurement, existing operator rights, proper industry consultation or the integrity of Queensland's passenger transport contracting framework, yet QBIC confirmed that neither it nor other relevant industry associations were consulted before these amendments were introduced. If the changes are necessary to deliver the Wave, the government should make the case transparently and consult the industry affected.

We all want safer roads, dangerous drivers held accountable and better public transport, but stronger laws must also be fair, evidence based and workable in practice. The government has heard considerable evidence through the committee process. It should carefully consider those concerns to ensure these reforms deliver the road safety outcomes Queenslanders expect. Finally, I thank everyone who made a submission or appeared before the committee as well as my fellow committee members and the secretariat for all their hard work throughout this inquiry.