


Queensland Parliament Hansard Green

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SUBJECT: (no subject found)

MEMBER: Mrs LAUGA

 **Mrs LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (3.20 pm): This bill is first and foremost about safety. It is about the safety of our community, the safety of emergency services workers and the safety of the individuals planning to use these devices. The government fully supports the right to protest, but community safety will always be paramount. The changes in this bill will make it easier for police to prevent disruptions to the daily lives of Queenslanders. Anyone who uses one of these devices during a protest will also be subject to a new offence.

We have seen over the past few months that Queensland has entered a new era of extremist action. No-one disputes the right of people to protest peacefully and lawfully. Peaceful and lawful protests are a bedrock principle of our democratic society. The changes to the law we are introducing will have no impact on the ability of anyone to protest lawfully, but the actions we are witnessing now are not protests. I honestly believe that the dangerous actions we are now witnessing completely detract from the purpose of the protests and the message the protests seek to send. What we are seeing now from these extremists is a blatant disregard for the law and the rights of others. These people clearly take the view that their opinions and beliefs override the legal rights of others. These extremists wilfully disrupt the right of others to go about their daily lives without interruption. This is contrary to the shared values of our democratic society. This extreme behaviour will not be tolerated.

This bill will help keep our frontline emergency services workers and the broader community safe. There has been a significant increase in the use of potentially dangerous tactics by a small cohort of individuals which is putting at risk the safety of first responders and the individuals themselves. These tactics include the use of potentially dangerous attachment devices such as sleeping dragons, dragon's dens, tripods and monopoles. Removal or disassembly of these devices often requires the use of specialist tools like angle grinders, cold cut saws, hydraulic cutters, hammer drills and jackhammers. The use of such equipment in proximity to a person's body represents a real risk of injury. The risk is exacerbated by the way some attachment devices have previously been or may be constructed. This includes where individuals have reinforced the devices with glass, wire, steel and other items.

This bill will make it an offence to use a dangerous attachment device. Police will have the power to deactivate, disassemble and dispose of anything that is a dangerous attachment device. The penalty for using one of these devices will be up to two years imprisonment or a fine of nearly \$7,000. It is both the design of these devices and the manner in which they are used that make them potentially dangerous. For example, devices which are embedded with metal or other items and those which incorporate glass sleeves can result in significant injuries to the individual, police, emergency services and community members if removed incorrectly or hastily. Devices that use trip wires or drums reinforced with concrete to obstruct rail lines and roads could result in serious injury or death if individuals are not removed and the trains or vehicles stopped.

I have participated in a number of rallies and protests in my life, including against John Howard's draconian Work Choices legislation, against plans by the LNP to increase our HECS fees when I was a uni student and in support of women's reproductive rights. All of these protests have been peaceful. Many people take their children to rallies and protests, as I have done in the past. When I speak to school students about the importance of playing an active role in our democracy, I encourage them to get involved peacefully in causes that are important to them. Protests are a cornerstone of our free democracy, but when people turn violent and use dangerous tactics or attachment devices, like we have witnessed in Queensland recently, it should be against the law. I commend the bill to the House.