



Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

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**TRANSPORT LEGISLATION (ROAD SAFETY AND OTHER MATTERS)
AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (2.56 pm): I rise to speak to the Transport Legislation (Road Safety and Other Matters) Amendment Bill 2019. As a former police officer, this issue is very dear to my heart. Today I do not intend to stand here and relate to the chamber all the gory details of every fatal accident that I have ever attended as a police officer. However, I do want to say that, at the accidents that I have attended where alcohol was a contributing factor, there was always a sense of frustration. There was always the sense that that accident could have been prevented with better enforcement, better education and with a better acceptance, if you like, from right across the community of our laws regarding drink-driving.

Certainly everyone in our community deserves to travel safely on our roads. Everyone in our community deserves to know that their family and their loved ones will arrive safely at their destination. Whether they are driving for business or pleasure, taking the kids to school or whatever the case may be, road safety is one issue that unites each and every one of us.

I will not be opposing this bill, because the LNP has always placed road safety high on its list of priorities. The fact is that, despite the best efforts of government over the years, in 2017 on Queensland roads we saw a fatality every 35 hours. In that same year, every 95 minutes we saw a serious injury on our roads—serious injuries that far too often have life-changing consequences. In the past 12 months there have been five fatalities along a 10-kilometre section of the Bruce Highway south of Townsville, in my electorate of Burdekin. That highlights just how real and tragic road accidents can be.

I can tell the House that, as a police officer or emergency services worker, there is little worse than getting a call to attend the scene of a fatal traffic accident. There is absolutely nothing worse than having to knock on the door of a household and inform the members of that family that they have just lost a loved one. Without question that is the worst aspect of being an emergency service worker. Today as part of my contribution, I pay tribute to all our emergency services workers—the police, the fireys, the ambos—because theirs is a tough job. It is a tough gig when you go to the scene of a fatal traffic accident, particularly when children are involved. I pay tribute to the work that they do and will continue to do to help make our roads a safer place.

They are confronting figures. In some ways it may sound like a losing battle, but I encourage all members of this House to support this bill and I ask that they give an ironclad pledge to all the people of Queensland that these measures are merely a step to reducing the road toll and that we will continue to do what is needed to save lives on our roads, not just today but also into the future because one death on Queensland roads is one death too many.

Drink-driving is a scourge on our society. I have locked up my fair share of drink-drivers and I do not regret locking any of them up. As far as I am concerned, if you are out there drink-driving then you deserve to face the full brunt of the law. I have absolutely no sympathy for anyone who gets behind a wheel having consumed alcohol, or drugs for that matter.

I welcome the introduction of education programs for first-time drink-drivers and repeat offenders, particularly given the research that indicates that this will reduce drink-driving and therefore the road toll. We must be continually looking for ways and methods and policies and procedures that are going to reduce the road toll in this state. We can never take our eye off the ball when it comes to road safety. Anything that is going to reduce the number of fatalities and serious road accidents in this state should be something that we all embrace.

I know that there has been a lot of discussion here and a lot of contributions from members today about roads and the conditions of roads. That is something very dear to my heart and to the hearts of my constituents as my electorate still has several hundred kilometres of unsealed roads which are increasingly being utilised by resource sector workers and by the agricultural industry. I will continue to advocate for improvements, because it is important. Road conditions do play a part in traffic accidents. Whether you want to accept that or not, they certainly do play a major part in traffic accidents in this state.

Speeding continues to be a significant factor in road accidents. There is no better deterrent than a blue uniform or a highway patrol car or a police motorcycle, whatever the case may be, when it comes to speed enforcement. Cameras have their place. There is no question about that, but when someone is getting a ticket weeks after they have committed the offence I question whether they have actually learnt anything from that. It is completely different if you are driving down the highway and a police officer stands out in front of you and signals for you to pull over to the side of the road and gives you a ticket and at the same time gives you a serve which you probably deserve. That to me is the best deterrent of all. For me, it is about making sure that the Police Service has the resources—the staff and equipment—to undertake road traffic enforcement in this state and that we continue to give them the resources in terms of the growth areas of this state where they are most needed.

Whilst I and my colleagues support the intention of this bill to make our roads safer, we must not forget the roads themselves right throughout the state. We have heard today from some members about the importance of major highways to our south such as the M1, but let us put into perspective that some of our country roads are just as important. Queensland is a vast state with a vast network of roads. The minister is sitting here with a big chequebook, I hope, to improve these roads and is listening to the contributions from the country members here today in terms of the priorities going forward, particularly along our major highways such as the Bruce Highway and the importance of overtaking lanes and upgrades to that highway, which is seeing increasing volumes of traffic year on year. I will continue to fight for those improvements as we go forward. As someone who has seen the devastating effect that road trauma has had in this state, I implore all members to support this legislation and to stand together to make Queensland roads safer.