



Speech by

**Jann Stuckey**

**MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN**

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## **CRIMINAL CODE (SERIOUS ASSAULTS ON POLICE AND PARTICULAR OTHER PERSONS) AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mrs STUCKEY** (Currumbin—LNP) (8.17 pm): I rise to speak in the debate on the Criminal Code (Serious Assaults on Police and Particular Other Persons) Amendment Bill 2010 introduced into the House by the shadow Attorney-General and member for Southern Downs on 24 February 2010. In doing so, I wish to convey my strong support for the provisions contained within this bill and place on record the LNP's commitment to support our police and emergency workers who have once again been hung out to dry by this Labor government.

Listening to the Attorney tonight I learned that his first reason for opposing this bill was that it did not encompass a wide range of workers. Well, it is a darn good start. It is very interesting also that the industry supports it. I was shocked when the Attorney then downplayed the serious assaults on front-line workers. Labor is not only soft on crime; it is limp-wristed when it comes to standing up for front-line workers. Graphic news footage of drunken youths and adults resisting arrest and lashing out at police really does highlight the extreme danger that officers place themselves in each time they go out on patrol, with night shifts in entertainment precincts more perilous than other areas.

The urgency of this bill is demonstrated by the rise in the number of assaults on police and front-line emergency workers in recent years as they do their best to protect the Queensland public. The clear aim of the bill is to implement a minimum sentence standard for certain types of serious assaults on police and specified public officers in an effort to deter offenders which would, in turn, reduce the rate of assaults on our emergency service workers. Covered by provisions in this bill are police, ambulance, fire and rescue and rural fire officers.

The bill seeks to amend the Criminal Code to insert a new subsection 2(C) in section 340, titled 'Serious Assaults', to impose imprisonment of at least three months in circumstances of serious assaults specifically causing bodily harm to a prescribed person, or biting, spitting on or throwing bodily fluid or faeces at a prescribed person. This bill also proposes that the sentence not be suspended in whole or in part for the first three months. If the convicted person is a child, under the Juvenile Justice Act 1992 new subsection 2(C) will not apply if the court is satisfied that exceptional circumstances exist.

I must say that I have an uneasy feeling of *déjà vu* as I make my contribution today. Two and a half years ago—on Wednesday, 27 February 2008—I delivered a speech on a similar private member's bill that would have amended the Criminal Code to extend greater protection to our emergency service officers. The LNP's bill was voted down by this Labor government, as were a number of other pieces of legislation that would have assisted our police in their fight against crime.

But why be surprised? Labor members take these dedicated front-line workers for granted, just as they do nurses, doctors and health workers, whom they rob of their pay. Assaults against police have been in excess of 2,700 a year for the past two years. Labor has been in power for all of that time. Total assaults have steadily increased over the past decade. Labor has been in power for all of that time. Without doubt, the culture of violence against our emergency service officers is increasing and this arrogant government

has sat there watching it unfold. These skilled workers face deadly scenarios on an increasingly frequent basis and this Labor government turns a blind eye.

Equally sickening, as is the graphic footage that we see on our television screens, are the unprovoked attacks on ambulance officers who are trying to administer aid. Reports in the *Gold Coast Bulletin* in May this year revealed that paramedics have been punched, kicked, spat at and even sexually assaulted by revellers when attending to incidents in the nightspots of Surfers Paradise and Broadbeach on the Gold Coast. It is shameful to admit that it has reached the point at which police protection is needed before paramedics can administer help to injured persons. The Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union released figures indicating that 94 per cent of ambulance officers have been the victim of assault while performing their duties and that 87 per cent fear for their safety when attending jobs. How can this government sit by idly while our front-line emergency services cop these attacks? The amendments contained within this bill have the full support of the industry itself, with the Queensland Police Union calling for mandatory jail sentences to reflect the seriousness of these crimes.

The Gold Coast is facing an unwelcome surge in violent attacks—the worst across the state—and my electorate of Currumbin has not been spared. In December 2009, whilst breaking up a fight outside a popular Coolangatta nightspot, Senior Sergeant Steve Quinn was hit from behind, causing potentially fatal injuries to his jaw and head. Only three months earlier Senior Sergeant Quinn was the first officer on the scene after one punch killed young Andrew Houlahan in the same area in September 2009. Amazingly, this dedicated officer was back to work within days of his attack.

I would like to praise the efforts of my local police: the Gold Coast Police Superintendent Jim Keogh, Inspector Des Lacy, Senior Sergeant Chris Ahearn from the Palm Beach station and the head of Coolangatta police, Senior Sergeant Mark Johnston. A concerted team approach by these gentlemen has seen the overall number of assaults drop in the Currumbin electorate. However, Gold Coast police are facing demands at rates never previously experienced. Cross-border pressures are experienced by Coolangatta based police and I notice that the minister has listened to my request to help streamline the process of special constables so that we are able to better police our borders. But battle weary officers who continue to be rostered on weekend shifts will burn out as a result of this government's inability to see the physical impacts that these extra demands are having. Police are crying out for reinforcement—more officers to control the thousands of drunks on the streets every Friday and Saturday night—but the Bligh government expects them to work even more weekends in order to get a pay rise.

This private member's bill from the LNP before us tonight shows our front-line officers—our police, ambulance, fire and rescue officers and rural fire officers—that we value their efforts, unlike Labor, which takes them for granted. Judging by the lack of government speakers to this bill—there are only five on my list—it is easy to see that the Labor government does not care for the wellbeing of these dedicated and important workers in our great state.