



Criminal Code (Assaults Against Police and Others)  
Amendment Bill 2007

Speech by GLEN ELMES MP  
MEMBER FOR NOOSA

Hansard, 27 February 2007

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**Mr ELMES (Noosa--Lib) (8.36 pm):** I rise to address the Criminal Code (Assaults Against Police and Others) Amendment Bill 2007 and want to record my support for this bill.

Further, I want to place on record my best wishes and the best wishes of every decent-thinking member of the Noosa electorate community to the two officers who were seriously assaulted over the Australia Day long weekend at Noosa Woods. Constable Lexie Melmoth and Senior Constable Darryn Parkes are decent, hardworking members of the Noosa police division and outstanding members of our community.

Cowardly attacks on them like this makes me absolutely determined that Lexie, Darryn and every member of the Queensland Police Service should be protected from thugs. I have here the shocking headline that confronted Sunshine Coast Daily readers on 28 January this year--'Cop kicked in the head'. For the benefit of the House, I will read part of the newspaper's report. It states-- A police officer was knocked to the ground and repeatedly kicked in the head when he came to the aid of colleagues caught up in a vicious brawl in the heart of Noosa on Saturday. I table the newspaper article.

Tabled paper: Copy of an article, titled 'Cop kicked in the head'.

It continues-- A 17-year-old Eumundi girl allegedly took issue with being arrested and assaulted a female officer. When this happened, police claim her friends attempted to interfere in the arrest by throwing bottles at the officers. One officer was knocked over and was kicked several times in the head by an unknown assailant as he lay on the ground. During the police attempts to calm the situation, another 17-year-old girl from Tewantin allegedly spat at the officer, hitting him in the neck. I table this newspaper report for the House to record the indecency with which these officers from the Queensland Police Service were subjected to on Australia Day. Incidents like these can occur when there is a lack of available police officers, and that is certainly the case in Noosa. I also table these three pages from the Noosa Journal dated 21 February which will highlight to the House the lack of response from the minister to provide adequate manpower to protect the Noosa community.

Tabled paper: Copy of an article from The Noosa Journal, dated 21 February 2008, titled 'Spence moves to fix problem she says doesn't exist: Secret talks to boost police numbers'.

As I said, the officers involved are long-time residents and servants of the Noosa community. They are, and continue to be, held in very high regard and respect for the selfless way they continue to put the Police Service and the community before consideration of their own personal safety. All members of the Queensland emergency services--police, ambos and fires--deserve to be protected. They deserve to be able to go to work every morning and know that the community that employs them and the parliament that enacts the laws that they must carry out will provide the best possible protection for them as well. There will be the bleeding hearts both inside this House tonight and outside in some sections of the community who will not agree with mandatory sentencing for three months of people convicted of assaulting police.

It is my very strong belief that if someone is convicted of spitting, biting, punching or otherwise assaulting members of our emergency services then they deserve a tough mandatory stay in one of Her Majesty's prisons. Frankly, my community--and I believe all decent Queenslanders--have had more than enough of the parade of excuses that we read about daily in our newspapers, which range from medical through to not being able to handle alcohol, or drugs, or both. The word must go out in the strongest possible terms: if you want to avoid jail, do not put yourself in the position, either mentally or physically, where you can even be tempted to assault police. If we speak to police officers and members of our emergency services, they will tell us that the problem of assault is getting worse. We could debate the possible causes for this all night and still not even scratch the surface. This bill is all about respect for our police, respect for the law, respect for society. If we do not start reinforcing now the values of our community, then the future for all of us will be greatly diminished.

In the case of the Police Service, I personally know of many police officers who, with many years experience, are leaving to go into other careers. The number of police officers who are leaving the Police Service is growing and the Queensland Police Service cannot afford to lose this knowledge. If at the same time it is becoming increasingly difficult to attract and train new police, Queensland has a major problem looming.

Tonight this parliament has a unique opportunity to send a message to our emergency services personnel, particularly the men and women of our Police Service, and that is that society has drawn a line in the sand and is determined to enforce in law their personal safety. The message must get through to the thugs who hunt in packs and the individuals who believe that they can spit blood into the faces of our police and otherwise seriously assault them and get away with no more than a slap on the wrist that their time of reckless disregard for community values is over. If that means that every person convicted of assaulting a police officer goes to jail, then so be it--no caution, no two or three warnings, no fines; jail every time. I hope a sufficient number of members opposite are prepared tonight to vote for this bill and see it come into law.

The people of Queensland--their constituents, their friends and families--will thank them. I commend the bill to the House.

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