



Speech by

Andrew Cripps

MEMBER FOR HINCHINBROOK

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HINCHINBROOK ELECTORATE, ASSAULTS ON POLICE AND AMBULANCE OFFICERS

Mr CRIPPS (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (9.27 pm): I rise to express my serious concern and disgust about two incidents that occurred in my electorate last week. It pains me to report to the House that, in the early hours of Tuesday morning last week, an ambulance officer was assaulted while he responded to a call to treat an elderly patient in Ingham. What I find most bizarre is that the assault was perpetrated by the son of the patient while the ambulance officer was trying to attend to his medical needs.

While it is fortunate the ambulance officer was not seriously injured, it is entirely appropriate that the incident was subsequently reported to police. I understand the individual who assaulted the ambulance officer has been charged, and so he should be. The assault of an ambulance officer in the course of doing their duty is cowardly and inexcusable and is not to be tolerated in Queensland.

Our ambulance officers increasingly and regrettably find themselves in harm's way responding to emergency calls. Ambulance officers are certainly amongst those people in the community who deserve special protection. Unfortunately, it has been reported that QAS officers are faced with very difficult situations on an almost weekly basis, including being verbally abused or threatened with violence. Indeed, unions representing ambulance officers have raised the possibility of a future requirement for ambulance officers to be accompanied by security officers when they are deployed to an emergency if there is no improvement in the standard of community regard for ambulance officers. Things are grim if ambulance officers believe they need to be accompanied by security officers on call-outs in order to do their job safely.

I am also distressed that last Saturday night a police officer was assaulted on duty at Mission Beach. I am extremely disappointed this assault has occurred. I consider it to be totally unacceptable and a sad reflection of the poor attitude some in the community have towards the police. It is alarming that North Queensland is a hot spot for assaults on police officers, with Cairns and Townsville on the list of the most dangerous places in Queensland for policing.

I am disgusted by the total lack of respect some people have for police officers. Police officers fulfil crucial and challenging public service roles for the benefit and safety of the community. Police officers perform their functions in some very demanding and stressful situations. If the law is to be respected, the people we charge with the responsibility of enforcing the law should also be respected. Failure to show that respect should have serious consequences. The current consequences are clearly not a deterrent.

The LNP has previously introduced a private member's bill into this parliament to provide for mandatory sentences for people who assault police and ambulance officers. Unfortunately, the state government voted against that bill. Tonight I call on the state government to rethink its attitude in view of the ongoing violence perpetrated against ambulance officers and police officers in this state which should be condemned in the strongest possible terms by this parliament not only with words but with actions.