




Speech By
Christian Rowan

MEMBER FOR MOGGILL

Record of Proceedings, 2 March 2017

LIQUOR AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (3.47 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Liquor and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2017. Before I do so, I want to acknowledge the member for Callide, the Hon. Jeff Seeney, for his contribution to this parliament. He is certainly an outstanding Queenslander. He has made a significant and sustainable contribution not only to our party here on this side of the House but also to public life in Queensland.

The main policy objective of the Liquor and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2017 as outlined is to address the findings of the Tackling Alcohol-Fuelled Violence Legislation Amendment Act 2016 interim evaluation report by making the following amendments which I will now discuss. What is before the parliament today is a complete backflip on Labor's policy which was implemented last year by the Palaszczuk Labor government. I would like to take the House back to 18 February 2016 when Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk gave a ministerial statement on alcohol fuelled violence and said—

Queensland finally has laws in place which the evidence shows will reduce alcohol fuelled violence. I made a commitment while in opposition to implement laws that would keep Queenslanders safer. I am proud to say that as a government we have delivered those laws.

Today we are debating a repeal of lockouts, repealing the 3 am safe night precincts model, tightening the temporary late-night extended hours permit regime and extending the banning order sentencing regime to prescribe drug offences. Clearly, this is both a major policy backflip and a broken election commitment by the Palaszczuk Labor government. There has been no obvious reduction in alcohol related assaults during the period of 1 July 2016 to 31 December 2016 either in safe night precincts or across Queensland. The interim evaluation report also found that there has been no significant change in injury presentations at emergency departments during high alcohol consumption periods.

I would like to at this time revisit the LNP's Safe Night Out Strategy, which was a comprehensive plan to deal with both alcohol and drug related violence. This strategy aimed to change culture, to restore responsibility and respect, and to make it clear that antisocial behaviour would not be tolerated in and around Queensland nightspots. This was a \$44.5 million comprehensive strategy with 60 initiatives. As the then president of AMA Queensland, both I and AMA Queensland gave our full support to this evidence based strategy—that is, the Safe Night Out Strategy.

I will give some historical context. No one individual has a mandate on trying to reduce alcohol fuelled violence here in Queensland. As an addiction medicine specialist myself and having been a former member of the Queensland Mental Health Commission's Mental Health and Drug Advisory Council and a member of the Australasian Professional Society on Alcohol and other Drugs, I certainly know firsthand what can happen with excessive alcohol and/or drug consumption by individuals in our community and certainly the physical, psychological and social harms which can result. Back in 2012, 2013 and 2014 in various roles that I held with the Australian Medical Association, there were multiple meetings with representatives of various organisations interested in reducing alcohol related harms. These included meeting with representatives of various professional organisations, including the

Australasian Chapter of Addiction Medicine, the Rural Doctors Association of Queensland, the Queensland Network of Alcohol and other Drug Agencies, the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners and the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine.

I have a lot of professional respect for the member for Stafford as a medical colleague. However, the member for Stafford's zealot-like approach to lockout laws and trading hours as being the single focus to reducing alcohol misuse and abuse is not serving and has not served the community well. It has failed to deal with a much broader whole-of-government strategy which needs to be designed and led, in my view, from the office of the Premier. This would deliver a truly translational outcome for the benefit of the entire community across Queensland. Such a strategy needs to be focused on all substance misuse—from alcohol to prescription drugs and synthetic drugs—and also focused on illicit drugs, including all amphetamine type stimulants, hallucinogens and even organic compounds. A balanced approach to all alcohol and drug issues with respect to demand reduction, community education, harm minimisation, cultural change and a realistic and sustainable supply mitigation strategy is certainly needed. The LNP's Safe Night Out Strategy was a terrific beginning in this regard and should have been given additional time to work.

Perhaps the member for Ferny Grove, the Hon. Mark Furner, should have researched this prior to his last contribution on this subject last year. Those who were in the parliament at the time will remember that this Safe Night Out Strategy was the result of widespread community consultation after the then Liberal National Party government conducted an online survey to find out Queenslanders' views about possible measures to manage alcohol and drug related violence. This survey attracted over 12,342 responses from a range of Queenslanders with diverse backgrounds.

We would not be examining further legislation now had the Premier listened to the evidence last year, rather than simply trying to grab a quick headline and putting out media spin. Today is an embarrassing backdown for the Palaszczuk Labor government and for many Labor members, in particular the member for Ferny Grove and the member for Stafford. There is also a lack of commentary in the public domain from the chair of the RACS Trauma Committee or even unionist Dr Tony Sara supporting Labor's backflip. I would be interested to know what the member for Stafford thinks about that.

The retrospectivity of the process for temporary one-off late-night extended hours permits is something that this side of the House cannot support. The Liberal National Party position has been and continues to be that the Safe Night Out Strategy should have been given a chance to work—in particular, since considerable time and community consultation had taken place. It was a comprehensive strategy that took a holistic approach to addressing the dual issues of alcohol and drug related violence. I would encourage all members to read the statement of reservation in the parliamentary committee report in relation to the legislation before us today.

I am sure today is the beginning of an ongoing process whereby various pieces of legislation passed by the Palaszczuk Labor government will need ongoing review and, in some cases, will have to be repealed. The Palaszczuk Labor government's liquor laws have been a shambles from start to finish. The Labor Party's hypocrisy on liquor laws is extraordinary. The only redeeming aspect today is that Labor is now endorsing and adopting the LNP's policy.