



Speech by

**Hon. TOM BARTON**

**MEMBER FOR WATERFORD**

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Hansard 15 September 1998

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

**Prostitution Law Reform**

**Hon. T. A. BARTON** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (9.51 a.m.), by leave: A few days after being sworn in as Minister for Police and Corrective Services in June this year, I was asked by media representatives what my view was on prostitution law reform. Bearing in mind the Labor Party's election promise to review the current laws, I said that I would be moving quickly to establish a process whereby a discussion paper would be released, followed by extensive public consultation. I said that, based on public consultation and if there was any need for legislative change, I hoped to be able to have a Bill before the House in the first half of next year. I made it clear that I did not have a preferred option for prostitution reform and would not pre-empt the results of the public consultation. However, I did say that we would ask the previous Government for a copy of its information paper on prostitution law reform, which was a confidential Cabinet document.

I would like to thank the Opposition Leader, Rob Borbidge, for supplying a copy of this paper. I also thank the previous Police Minister for his cooperation. Before receiving the document, I had also said publicly that the previous Government's information paper would form the basis for public consultation on prostitution law reform. While the previous Government's information paper was considered a good starting point, it was considered not to be comprehensive enough to be a discussion paper suitable for public consultation. It failed to adequately expand on some areas of concern, such as the role of local governments and street prostitution.

Since making these public comments, there has been a great deal of media attention placed on prostitution law reform. Some comments from interested individuals have been based on speculation while others have been absolutely wrong. People have speculated that the Government would be allowing brothels to be established throughout Queensland. No decision at all has been made on this issue and the Government will only finalise its position following public consultation. As I have already said, all my comments about the issue have been restricted to the process involved in reviewing the current laws.

I am pleased to announce that State Cabinet has endorsed this process and a timetable to carry out public consultation. A discussion paper will be prepared by a working party made up of Government representatives and nominees from the major interest groups, including the Local Government Association, SQWISI, the Sex Workers Law Reform Coalition, Police, the Research Division of the Criminal Justice Commission, Health and Justice and Attorney-General. We expect the development of the discussion paper to take about two months, which will be followed by a two-month public consultation period which will also involve public forums throughout the State. The State Opposition, through its Police spokesman the member for Broadwater, will be invited to take part in these public forums.

I would also like to put on the public record my appreciation of the offer of bipartisan support on prostitution law reform made by the member for Broadwater in the Courier-Mail last week. Interested groups and individuals will have until the end of the year to make submissions based on the discussion paper and, as I said, any necessary legislative changes will be ready for the first half of next year. This process will be overseen by a ministerial task force including myself and the Ministers for Health, Local Government, Families and Women's Policy and the Attorney-General. Cabinet also endorsed the

appointment of former CJC research officer Susan Johnson to assist the working party in the preparation of the discussion paper. Ms Johnson prepared the information paper on prostitution law reform for the previous Borbidge/Sheldon Government. I have endeavoured to begin the review process as quickly as possible and I look forward to constructive comments from the members of the House and the public during the consultation period.

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