



Speech by

BILL FELDMAN

MEMBER FOR CABOOLTURE

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LIQUOR AMENDMENT BILL

Mr FELDMAN Caboolture—ONP) (9.27 p.m.): Tonight it is with heartfelt emotion that I rise to contribute to the debate on the Liquor Amendment Bill. We have witnessed a similar debate previously, when we had a debate at 6 o'clock in relation to the issue. It has been recognised that it was a truly emotive debate. This is a day of remembrance that strikes at the heart of each and every one of us—not just members on this side but those on the other side of the Chamber also. I witnessed the tears in the eyes of and the heartfelt grief and sorrow expressed by the member for Bulimba and the member for Gladstone. It is not that every one of us does not feel as deeply about the day as they do. We all have reminders of this day through, as we have said before, mums, dads, uncles, aunts and grandparents. I can relate to the member for Bulimba. I marched with my grandfather before his death in 1978. I have held his hand in the marches. We all have memories of people who were in the war. However, let us pay true homage to the day. That is what this legislation is about.

I remember marching with my grandfather. I remember attending many of the little functions after the service. I remember the conversation and I remember the way that they used to remember the day. It is about paying that day true homage. I have also been there in a police uniform. I have led the march and I have been there before the march, cleaning up some of the stuff that was left from the night before and ensuring that no drunks were going to disrupt the day; that no-one was lying on benches or the footpath who could detract from the day itself, especially the main service, the dawn service.

We do not want to be there taking away the leftovers late in the morning, and that is what police are asked to do. What we are asking here is that we give the police a certain amount of time to do that rather than try to do it just before a service starts. I can see no reason why we cannot have liquor turned off at midnight. Having been a police officer I can see no good reason at all why that should not happen. I have still got a bridge in my mouth from handling drunks. I have scars over my eye from fighting with them and dragging them off. It is not fun. All I am saying is: give the police a little bit of time, give them a little bit of a pat on the back for trying to do it and give them time to actually clean up what is there—not just an hour or so before a service starts.

I can see no reason not to give the diggers the true reverence that this issue deserves. It is their day. We like to enjoy it with them. Let us give them the whole day. I recognise what each and every one of us have said here before. We have to remember these diggers, especially the ones who were at Gallipoli, who were in their boats before midnight knowing what they had to face the next day on those beaches, knowing what they had to face up those cliffs. They would have prayed that night, but unfortunately death was with them that night as they prayed. That being the case, I just think midnight is a good time to turn off the grog and say, "Let us give the day to the diggers." That is what this Bill says to me.

Over the years we have witnessed a lot of things about Anzac Day. I can remember growing up as a boy and hearing all the conjecture such as, "This is a day that celebrates war", and, "This is a day that celebrates death", and really in some way denigrating the day and detracting from it. The pendulum, I think, has swung back a fair degree and I think now we are giving this day a lot of the reverence that it truly deserves. We actually have seen a huge turn-out to the marches in recent years. There has been a real resurgence in people wanting to know about the day. There has been a real resurgence, especially in our youth, about wanting to know what this day really does mean. It is about the price that was paid on foreign shores by Australian blood.

As the member for Gladstone said, we probably all have lost some relative. I remember an Anzac Day service this year and bringing it home to some kids up at the Caboolture State School by standing them all up and then tapping one in seven on the shoulder and making them sit down. That is the number of friends and relatives that we would have lost in that time. That really brought it home to them how much this day really, really means, especially to the diggers.

In common with all members in this House, I really did admire the intent of the motion moved by the member for Gladstone that day. In common with her, I shared some of the concerns with respect to the unacceptable behaviour that might occur. We say "might" because these things do not happen all the time. We are not saying they do. What we are saying is that we should do something to prevent them from occurring so that the time honoured tradition of attending the Anzac dawn service is not detracted from.

This tradition was born out of the respect for and humble pride that we as people—in fact, as a nation—still have in the sacrifice that our soldiers did pay in foreign lands. This sacrifice is one that gave us the very freedoms that we now hold so dear. I always remind our new citizens at citizenship ceremonies of that fact. Freedom of association, freedom of religion, freedom of speech and every other basic human right that we have today was paid for on the shores of foreign countries in Australian blood.

To sacrifice the day has come to the point of whether some licensed bodies and their mates and lobbyists are prepared to sacrifice four hours of profit for the lives of these men and women. The Bill does not require licensed premises to close and to send their patrons home dead on midnight; the Bill asks them to stop serving liquor to them at midnight, not for some insignificant event but out of respect for those who fought for the way of life which we all enjoy today. Without the sacrifices of those ex-service personnel, some pleasantries such as dining at restaurants, dancing at nightclubs and drinking at the local pub might not even exist today. Who knows what type of society we might have been living in now? What do we know? Without a doubt those Australian men and women risked their lives to defend our country. There is no argument about that. I say that four or five hours' worth of profits from the sale of alcohol is of very little significance and very little consequence and is certainly no comparison to what our diggers went through.

Let us be honest, this Bill is directed only at those who might drunkenly disrupt Anzac Day dawn ceremonies. The majority of those people might perhaps be on their way home from those nightclubs. Many nightclubs in Brisbane, for instance, close between 3 a.m. and 5 a.m. People are usually quite intoxicated by then and are excited, mingling, saying goodbye to friends, getting something to eat at several of the fast food places that are still open at that time, looking for taxis and perhaps even fighting for taxis to go home. Dawn ceremonies do not really stand a chance against some intoxicated young people still in party mode.

If it was any other day, I would not really have a problem with anyone of legal age staying out till the early hours of the morning drinking at night spots as long as their behaviour was acceptable. Anzac Day, however, is different altogether and it only occurs once a year. Besides the importance of this special day, it is also commemorative, celebratory and a remembrance—a public day that we have that involves ceremonies occurring at that time of the morning. Surely ending drinking at midnight is not too much to ask out of respect for our diggers, especially considering the memory of the actions of those brave soldiers reflected every year by Anzac Day in order that future generations may also remember what was lost and gained, especially in both world wars.

This Bill should see more young people sober and eager to attend the dawn services and Anzac Day parades to pay respect to those who did give their lives for them. That is just another positive aspect of this Bill. Let me stress again the sanctity of Anzac Day and the need to give those who wish to remember the freedom to do so without interruption or harassment. As the member for Gregory said, we should also think of the soldiers in East Timor at this moment and consider the reality of what our soldiers had to see and suffer and the very young ages at which they experienced battle. The highest of esteem should be paid to those people to ensure that they know that their sacrifices are certainly appreciated, especially in this day and age by this generation—a generation of today's young soldiers as well.

This is not just good legislation; it is important legislation and necessary legislation not just for the generations who have fought for and protected our country, but for our future generations of the. Lest they forget.
