



Speech by

**Hon. R. GIBBS**

**MEMBER FOR BUNDAMBA**

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Hansard 25 May 1999

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

**Sale of Alcohol in Unlicensed Premises**

**Hon. R. J. GIBBS** (Bundamba—ALP) (Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing) (9.45 a.m.), by leave: Honourable members will be aware that it is an offence under the Liquor Act 1992 to illegally sell liquor in unlicensed premises. Unfortunately, in recent years a small number of rogue operators have continued to thumb their noses at authorities by deliberately selling alcohol at unlicensed premises. This situation is about to stop.

I serve notice on those operators today that, during the current sitting of Parliament, I intend to introduce amendments to the Liquor Act designed to crack down on their illegal trade. The Government will strengthen the existing Act by vastly increasing penalties for offences to include jail sentences and give liquor licensing inspectors greater powers to seize property from unlicensed premises to prevent further sales.

Under the changes approved by State Cabinet, the maximum fine for illegally selling alcohol will be increased from the current \$18,750 to \$75,000 and/or 18 months' jail for repeat offenders. Penalties for a first offence will double to \$37,500. A second offence will incur a penalty of \$52,500 and/or six months' jail. Persons convicted of third or subsequent offences will face a maximum \$75,000 fine and/or 18 months' jail for each offence. Liquor licensing inspectors and police will also have greater powers to confiscate liquor stocks, cash and any other property in unlicensed premises to prevent the recurrence or continuance of these offences.

The current provisions of the Act have proved no deterrent because fines imposed by the Magistrates Court are often in the order of \$200 for a first offence, often without a conviction being recorded. Premises such as Players Inn at Spring Hill continue to trade in unlicensed alcohol despite very close attention from my department and the police. Since 5 February, Players Inn has been raided no less than 24 times and has had more than \$60,000 worth of alcohol, cash and property confiscated.

However, the operator continues to flout the law and manipulates the mechanics of the current legislation by putting up "first time" offenders as the persons in charge of the business for the purposes of court prosecutions. It is understood that fines incurred are being paid by the operator on behalf of his staff, who in turn are paid a bonus for their court appearance.

The amendments I propose will make it extremely difficult for operators to continue their illegal trade or to "hide" behind their staff from authorities. These tough new measures are the only way we can stamp out the illegal sale of alcohol by those few unlicensed operators who continue to break the law.

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