



Speech by  
**Mr DENVER  
BEANLAND**

**MEMBER FOR INDOOROOPILLY**

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Hansard 24 November 1999

**LIQUOR AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mr BEANLAND** (Indooroopilly—LP) (9.27 p.m.): I commend the member for Toowoomba North for bringing forward this legislation. It is very difficult to understand the Government's position in relation to this matter. I notice that, this year, a raft of facilities around town that hold liquor licences will be closed on New Year's Eve. However, when one asks them to close for Anzac Day, that seems to be a different matter. It is good enough for those premises to close on New Year's Eve—a time that one would think they would have wanted to be open.

This raises the question of the Minister's real position. No wonder this Bill is an embarrassment to members of the Government. Members of the Labor Party get up and try to give all sorts of excuses for the Minister, who seems to have some problem with this Bill. I dare say that other members on that side do not have the same problem. I think that they have been pushed into this position. It is worth while noting that the Minister says that, if this Bill is passed and we stopped liquor sales at midnight on Anzac Day eve, Queensland will become some sort of laughing-stock in Australia.

Just a few days ago in the Sunday Mail it was reported that a number of licensed outlets in the city will be closed—it is estimated to be some 80%—on New Year's Eve. I even noticed that the Treasury Casino said that it was going to close at 10 o'clock on New Year's Eve because it was not profitable for them to remain open owing to the huge salaries that they will have to pay and the additional security costs that they will have to incur in relation to remaining open. This Bill is all about the almighty dollar, the liquor sales that such outlets might miss out on on the eve of Anzac Day if they have to close at 10 o'clock or midnight. However, when it comes to New Year's Eve, when those outlets might face a huge increase in salaries and security costs, it is no problem for them to close.

A range of comments has been made on this issue. A Sunday Mail straw poll of bars around Queensland found that up to 80% of city watering holes, including the Treasury Casino, intend to close before midnight. Many city hoteliers have decided to take the night off, citing inflated entertainment and security costs of up to 10 times the normal. Added to that are fears of unruly behaviour and staffing problems because the hotels will have to pay such huge amounts to get people to work. The Queensland Hotels Association has said that uncertainty about pay rates may have influenced hotels. I am sure that it did, and that is what we are talking about here.

The Minister does not want to make this decision. It has nothing to do with Queensland becoming the laughing-stock of Australia or anything of the kind. This is all about liquor sales, outlets, revenue and the pressures that are obviously being brought to bear on the Minister not to budge on this issue even though many of the RSLs have indicated their concerns to him. They are particularly concerned about some of his comments in relation to this matter. It is quite clear that the Minister does not want to reconsider the decision because his pride is involved.

The Minister says that there were no problems at last year's Anzac Day services. That might be because additional police were rostered on, which I understand is what occurred. Nevertheless, I am sure that problems will occur in due course. It is only a matter of time before Anzac Day dawn services are denigrated. It does little for any Government or Parliament when that sort of thing occurs. One cannot ensure that that will not occur because of the all-night operations of some licensed premises. I

am sure that all members would be aware that trading all night means that many people roll out of licensed premises at 4 o'clock or 5 o'clock in the morning, and they want to throw their weight around. That is when dawn services are disrupted, which leads to other problems.

I will not repeat all the points that members have made about the sanctity of Anzac Day. It makes Queensland somewhat of a laughing-stock when such situations occur and the Government does not take action to stop it. There is no reason to allow licensed premises to remain open in the wee hours of Anzac Day except, as I say, for the almighty dollar. It is good enough for the hotels to close on New Year's Eve when it will cost them money to remain open, but on Anzac Day, when they might make a dollar, they have to remain open. That highlights the Government's insincerity in this exercise. This is the second or third time that we have debated this issue and still the Minister will not budge. I am sure that in the community generally there is overwhelming support for this particular course of action, yet the Minister has not been able to come up with reasons for supporting it.

The shadow Minister has outlined the benefits and the processes of his proposed amendment to section 9(3) of the Liquor Act, relating to trading hours on the eve of Anzac Day. If passed, the legislation would mean that licensed premises would close at midnight but could reopen at 1 p.m. on Anzac Day after the services have been completed. It is not as though those premises will be required to be closed for 24 hours—far from it. They will be closed only from midnight until 1 p.m., which is 13 hours, to allow dawn services and other Anzac Day services to occur. The Minister has not given any reasons why that should not occur.

We treat Christmas Day and Good Friday as special days. In recent years, Anzac Day has also become a special day for Australians to celebrate the nationhood of this country. It has certainly come to be seen as one of the country's sacred days, yet we cannot close the liquor outlets because the Minister thinks that that might make the State a laughing-stock. Hotels and other licensed premises have no problem with closing on New Year's Eve, which is the very night when one would have expected those facilities to remain open. That highlights the fact that this issue comes back to the almighty dollar and nothing else.

The Minister has faced some problems in relation to this issue. He has received a warning in relation to the Cairns RSL sub-branch. Sub-branches have received the warning that if they play tough with the Minister, he will play tough back. That is all very well, but I do not think that, at the end of the day, it does much for the Minister or for parliamentarians generally. That merely shows the people that the Minister is one of the elite and that the system is full of humbug. That approach certainly does not win the argument. The Minister has to try to win the argument, but it is not a winnable argument. The Minister cannot justify his stance, particularly when the owners of licensed premises have said recently that they will close on New Year's Eve, which is the very night when patrons would have expected that they would remain open. It is uneconomic for those premises to remain open because of high security and wage costs.

I ask the Minister to reconsider his position because, despite the speeches of a number of Government members, it is quite clear to me that Government members do not really want to oppose this Bill. They would much rather vote with this side of the Chamber in support of it. It is still not too late for the Minister to change his mind. All he has to do is swallow a little pride. It may be that some of the people who hold licences will be unhappy with the Minister, but at the end day it is the Minister who hands out licences so there is little that they can do about that. I call on the Minister to use his commonsense in relation to this matter and to support the Bill.

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