



Speech by
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RIVER NOISE

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—LP) (1.21 a.m.): I rise to make some brief comments about the growing problem of noise emanating predominantly from speed boats on the Brisbane River. I do so because, in recent times, the situation seems to be getting worse. It is quite obvious that, with the cessation of dredging, which occurred some time ago now and which was brought about by the coalition Government, the next issue that really needs to be addressed is that of noise. The problem of noise affects people who not only live along the banks of the river but also those who live some distance away. Quite often, one finds that the speed boats, which are predominantly the culprits, create such a noise that they can be heard for some considerable distance.

It is worth while noting that, in this day and age—and, in fact, for some time now—we have had noise controls for such things as stereos and musical instruments. The police can actually confiscate that type of musical gear and, from time to time, have done so when their use become a nuisance to neighbours. I am sure that we have all experienced or witnessed that occurring within our electorates. However, the noise problem as it relates to the river is vastly different from other noise problems. Although issues such as noise from motor vehicles has been addressed, noise from river traffic has not been addressed. In fact, over time very little has been done about noise emanating from that source. There are probably a number of reasons for that. Nevertheless, I believe that it is time for a close, hard look to be taken at this particular problem.

In the past—and it still does—the Department of Transport's Maritime Services and Harbours has had a lot of control over the vessels that use the river and the noise that emanates from those vessels. Nevertheless, the issue of noise emanating from those vessels is rarely addressed. Consequently, it is not only people living near the river who have to put up with this problem but also the University of Queensland, where students are studying, particularly during exam times and over weekends when a lot of this noise occurs. Therefore, this situation certainly needs to be addressed.

I understand that the Government has been looking at imposing a 75-decibel cut-off level. Of course, 75 decibels is simply far too noisy. Those of us who know what that noise level is like would know that, in those conditions, it is very difficult to carry on a conversation within a home nearby, have visitors over and carry on a normal lifestyle. Certainly, a person could not study or watch television with that level of noise. I believe that 55 decibels is much closer to the noise level target that we ought to be aiming for.

That level of noise will still allow for boats and vessels to go up and down the river, including speedboats. Some people believe that the more noise the speedboat makes, the faster the speedboat is going to travel or the better it is. We do not need that type of unmuffled noise emanating from speedboats. The problem emanates not only from speedboats but also from jet skis, which are a more recent arrival that cause a great deal of noise on the river. The noise of jet skis or water scooters—whatever we want to call them—is causing a great deal of community distress.

It is quite obvious that, with the 55-decibel noise level, those people who want to waterski can still do so and those who want to travel up and down the river can still do so. It just means that, with that noise level limitation, there will be more passive uses of the river rather than other uses that create rowdy noises measuring up to something like 75 decibels. I believe that that level is totally excessive.

That level of noise also creates a hearing problem for people. I know that many of us in this Chamber suffer from some hearing impairment. Anywhere near 75 decibels is quite noisy indeed. Quite frankly, over time that level of noise will certainly impair people's hearing capacity.

I think that it is time that further action was taken against the noise level of boats on the river, not only to put a limit on it but also to enforce that noise limit, as occurs with motor cars, stereos or whatever. We have limitations on the noise level of all of those things and noise limits on activities carried out in commercial areas, but when it comes to the river, little is done about the noise level. I believe that we must focus on that.
