



Speech by

Mrs D. PRATT

MEMBER FOR BARAMBAH

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LIQUOR AMENDMENT BILL

Mrs PRATT (Barambah—IND) (9.06 p.m.): Tonight I rise in support of the Liquor Amendment Bill because it is a worthy and right Bill and there is potential for good to come from its being passed. Anzac Day is an Australian institution. It is a day when families share a common interest and when the living generations come together to remember the unimaginable sacrifices our men and women made in years gone by so that we can live in this country in the manner that we do. No, there might not be many instances of drunks disrupting a dawn service, but there are definitely more today than there were 10 years ago and there are probably not as many today as there will be in 10 years' time. But why should there be any?

As the member for Hervey Bay stated, Queensland is on the move and everything is changing. It was not long ago that no shops opened after 5 p.m.. There was a time when pubs and clubs shut earlier than they do now. But we progress, and progression is a good thing. With progress comes change. People being people, there is an element that does not change for the better. No, we cannot stop people drinking. But on one night a year we can encourage them to go home early or perhaps to go to a private party. But at least private parties are usually located in private residences. All throughout history decisions have been made. Some are right and some are wrong. Sometimes, time alone reveals how grave these decisions are. There comes a time when all of us must look at decisions we have made and ask, "Is it right or is it wrong?" There are times when we must change. There are times when we must say, "This is wrong. We can change it and we must change it." There is no shame in changing our mind on an issue, but there is shame in letting something go on when we could have changed it. There is shame in being led by the nose when we know that it is contrary to our belief. This is an issue on which a conscience vote could be granted. It is an issue that is relevant to every Australian—every mum and dad and girl and boy—who feels and remembers the Anzacs.

It is well documented that Anzac Day attendances have risen quite considerably over the past 10 years. The few hours that we are talking about are not a very big thing, not compared with a power station extension at Tarong. They are not a big thing compared with 400 jobs at the South Burnett meatworks. They are not a big thing in comparison to the unemployment figures in the Wide Bay region and not a big thing in relation to coming to a workable agreement with respect to the RFA. But this could very well be one of those little things that niggles at people's minds. And who knows? We all know how aggravating a little thing can be. It is often stated in respect of relationships that it is not the big issues that break up a marriage but the little things.

I have trouble with Labor's stance on this Bill. I know there are members opposite who believe strongly in this Bill and would support it. I also know that it cuts those members to the quick to have to oppose it.

I did quite a lot of impromptu polling of people throughout the electorate. The responses I received were, "I wouldn't have a problem with that." "I can't see anyone being too unhappy by just a few hours." "It's not much to ask when they did so much for us, is it?" So it would seem the only people who have a problem are the members opposite. Yes, we must progress, but at what cost to society, at what cost to families? Our Governments have taught us to be selfish. Our Governments have taught us that we must progress—and well we must. However, we do not have to sacrifice respect and tradition in the process as we become driven by greed.

I have seen greed slowly destroying our society, encouraging our drinkers to drink more and enticing our gamblers to gamble more. Take, take, take and keep on taking till the people who cannot stop themselves have nothing left. Take and take until our children are left sitting outside casinos, till people can no longer feed their families and need food vouchers from our charitable organisations just to survive. Take and keep taking until the charitable organisations no longer have enough to go around because greed has left nothing to give. Everybody takes because the boundaries of decency and responsibility have been stretched and twisted until nobody knows what is right and wrong any more. No-one knows where their responsibilities lie. No-one accepts that they themselves are responsible and they must start somewhere to take control of their own lives. They must stop taking and start to give back.

This is a Bill that can give something back to society. This is a Bill that can put our priorities back on course in a very small way. It is a small step to pass a Bill which pays due homage to the heroes of this country. Heroes are in short supply—and I am talking about real heroes, not sporting heroes. Sporting heroes change yearly, if not daily—not that I belittle their endeavours for I would love to have their determination to achieve. But when I speak of heroes, I am talking about real heroes: those prepared to die for their beliefs, prepared to die for family, friends or country—people of immense courage.

I would like to draw a picture—a fairly old picture but one which will never be forgotten and should never be forgotten. These are my heroes. I make no apologies for being emotional because these heroes—true heroes—make people emotional. The first person I would like to talk about is Private William Erskine. He held his rifle high above his head, he jumped into the darkness and felt the cold salty water of the sea engulf him. He struggled towards the shore, hearing the splashing, the suppressed oaths of others who jumped into the sea with him and the cries of pain of those he knew he would not see again. He felt the dry sand of the beach against his face as he threw himself down to gain what little protection he could from bullets that coursed through the air. He heard the dull thud as one was stopped by the man beside him. This was his introduction to Gallipoli.

For 12 weeks Private Frank Llewellyn marched day after rainy day across the fertile fields of France in mud-filled boots with feet covered in blisters that festered. He thanked God for the rare sunny days that caused his greatcoat to steam as it dried and the nights when he had shelter in a bombed-out barn. He thanked God when the meal he lined up for was actually there and he thanked God when the drink he lined up for each night was, in fact, tea and not just hot water. His arrival in France was his first experience of war, but in those first 12 weeks he only heard, but never saw, the enemy.

Private Colin Lander spent a lot of his time trying to survive not on the battlefield but as a prisoner of war in Changi. He saw just as many suffer and die in Changi as did those on the battlefields. Each and every one of us know a Private William Erskine, a Private Frank Llewellyn or a Private Colin Lander. They are our brothers, our fathers, our uncles, our sons. Private Erskine came home from Gallipoli and suffered his private hell in solitude. Private Llewellyn kept a daily entry in his spiral backed notebook. For 12 weeks he saw no action, and finally the word came and he went forward in darkness to do battle. The shelling was heavy that night and he did not write in his notebook again. He did not come home. Private Colin Lander returned home emaciated, unable to walk unaided from the ship that carried him home, but he was determined not to have those who had come to meet him see him being carried off.

But what about the women? Nurse Molly—for that is how the wounded and dying knew her—was there to dress their wounds and hear their cries. When the young soldier at death's door called for his mother, she held him as life left him and was his mother. When the seasoned soldier in his last moments called for his wife, Nurse Molly became that wife and shed the tears. Young Connie X never saw the battlefields of war. She worked in intelligence, deciphering the messages and breaking the codes that were intercepted. Connie knew that the success of her efforts and many others would bring an end to the suffering, would bring an end to the war.

There have been many wars. The men and women of the Vietnam, Iraqi and other combat zones will gradually take the places of those of earlier wars. There are men, women and children suffering the horrors of war as we stand here tonight. Their countries are being torn apart, their families scattered or lost, their lives scarred. War is raging all over the planet, threatening to spill out into neighbouring countries. Just to our north in Timor is one such example. Let us pray that our young men and women do not have to display the courage of the Anzacs once again.

We did not come here tonight to glorify war, for there is no glory in what these men and women have endured. What we do tonight is acknowledge that these individuals went forth knowing that they may never see their families and countries again. They risked all in wars they did not start but were prepared to help stop. All of us here acknowledge their courage. We are here remembering tonight. We all honour the Anzacs—honour all who have fought in all wars, for they have given each and every one of us the greatest gift at the highest of prices.

What we should not be doing is debating this Bill. We should not have let this happen. That we could not have passed this Bill without debate is shameful. I ask all honourable members to just listen for a moment. Just take a second, be quiet and just listen. What they hear is peace. That is what those men and women gave us. What this Bill endeavours to give to those men and women is what they gave us—peace. They gave peace for generations born after them. Why is it so hard for us to give them peace for a few hours on the day when all generations join together to remember, to honour them? Lest we forget.
