



Speech by

## Miss FIONA SIMPSON

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

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Hansard 1 December 1999

### PROSTITUTION BILL

**Miss SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—NPA) (4.19 p.m.): I have heard the new age moralists in the Labor Party trying to tell us how they are somehow advancing the status of women by allowing for a larger prostitution industry. Members of the Beattie Government say that they are the enlightened ones, that they do not have their collective heads in the sand because they are going to clean up prostitution and put nice people in charge of the industry. Please, get real! Governments cannot keep drugs out of prisons where there are guards, barbed wire fences and a highly regulated environment, so how on earth are they going to keep drug barons and other organised crime links out of prostitution?

The only people with their heads in the sand are those who are pushing this very dishonest line that if we have legalised brothels with Government regulating them, nice honest people of great integrity are going to be taking up the licences. And pigs might fly backwards! The average person in the street knows that that is just not true. What the Labor Party is doing is expanding the prostitution industry. It is keeping the already legal single operators who are out in the community; they will remain in the community and there will be an additional layer of prostitution—the legalised brothels—in the community. This has more to do with dollars and people with financial interests pushing to get into this industry than it does with community standards and with looking after the people in our local communities.

With the expansion of prostitution, we will see more and more women and young men being encouraged into this industry. That certainly was the experience in Victoria. The industry has expanded. They have not kept drugs and crime out of that industry despite Governments saying, "We have to get involved and start regulating it." If people lifted their heads out of the sand, they would see that, when Governments get involved and add an extra layer of involvement with regulation, they still have problems with corruption and with police struggling with the regulations and a lot of young lives—young women and young men—are destroyed when those people are lured into this lifestyle. Some are lured by the dollars and others are caught in the never-ending drug vicious circle. Once they are in, they find it very difficult to break free.

I would like to quote some comments a former madam and former prostitute, Linda Coil, and some of her comments have already been quoted today. This is her advice to young girls who you are going into the industry—

"You are going to be an addict. You will never be the same. You only have to touch prostitution once and you will never be the same."

She said that she told them that around 87% of them would fall into drugs. The interviewer said—

"Now 87 percent, is that a figure you worked up yourself?"

And she replied—

"Yes, and also with all the madams that had meetings together. We would always sit there and work out percentages together to see on our staff who were on drugs and who weren't. Out of a hundred you would say that about 13 to 17 girls weren't on drugs."

She also went on to say that she estimated that about half of those who came into the industry initially were not on drugs but, inevitably, those who went in and became part of that lifestyle increasingly found that they were caught up in the drug web and lifestyle.

I have heard other members point out that the Drugs Misuse Act will still be in operation. Past experience of other Governments that have moved into regulation show that there is still a very high drug involvement of young men and women involved in the prostitution industry. They are as high as kites when they are involved in the industry, and that brings me to the other additional health issue. People involved in drugs are not going to be careful. We have heard about so-called safe sex and penalties for those who do not abide with the legislation, yet when people are involved in drugs, they take risks and are not aware of the risks that they are taking. This in itself is inevitably going to be a health risk not only to the prostitutes but also to their clients. Prostitutes are only as clean as the last client they have had.

We have heard that this legislation is going to require health checks to be carried out. That is all well and good except that it does not require health checks upon the clients. No health checks are ever going to deal with the fact that from one check-up to the next the person could be infected and could have had a lot of clients during that time and passed on a lot of infection to other people during that time.

Ultimately, as I said, there is a human price to this. Young women and men—an additional number of people in our generation—are going to be lured into this lifestyle because of people who offer money or people who offer to feed existing drug habits. People may make the mistake once, find themselves caught and find themselves on drugs and think that they have no hope and no way out. The fact that this Government says, "We will provide avenues to get people out of this lifestyle, to get people out of this industry because we know it is not really nice; we are just going to regulate it" is like putting a bandaid on a sore that will never be healed. The fact that the Government is allowing for the expansion of the industry and is trying to say, "We will help people out of it" is just sheer hypocrisy.

I have heard members here today say that they are not burying their heads in the sand. I know that many people who are going to be lured into the lifestyle in years to come will say, "Why did this Government make it so much easier to get into the industry? Why did this Government allow this industry to be legitimised in a way far and beyond the previous industry?" I think people in this place will have to honestly search their hearts and say that they were wrong, because this is not the answer.

If we look at the youth unemployment figures in some areas, we see that these are certainly a terrible problem in Australia today. Some 55,000 young people in Queensland between 15 and 24 years of age are unemployed, and members opposite try to tell me that those young people are not going to have people pushing this as a possible industry, as a possible opportunity. Once again, they would have to have their heads in the sand if they honestly believed that. There is no doubt in my mind that, as this industry expands over and beyond what it previously was—a more minimalist industry—we will see young people taking this up as a lifestyle option. Once caught, they are captured; they will be touched for life, as Linda Coil previously said. What did this former madam also say about current plans to legalise prostitution? She said—

"It should not be legalised. We know you are never going to stamp this out—but the police and politicians should attempt to reduce it. Legalising prostitution would be devastating for children coming up. Many girls would be tempted to enter prostitution. They will ask, 'Why do I have to go to work for a small income] when my girlfriend is getting \$3,000 a week?' It would cripple all these girls who became prostitutes—leave them wounded."

This is someone who did profit from the industry but who was also a victim of the industry. I do believe that we do need a compassionate approach to try to help people get out of the industry. But for goodness' sake, widening the gate into the industry is not the way to do it. We have heard stories about people from interstate who have expressed interest in moving their businesses up to Queensland. There is no doubt that they see the opportunity to expand the industry.

The issue of zoning and the authority of local governments to knock back applications for brothels has also been mentioned. There is no doubt that this Government has chosen to put legislation to the House that will pass the responsibility to many local governments and create a problem for many people who are opposed to legalised brothels and who have a concern about the young unemployed people in their community and their vulnerability to this. There has been talk that, under this legislation, communities with under 25,000 people will have a means of blocking brothels in their communities, but those in communities with over 25,000 people will find that they will not be able block a legalised brothel in their area.

I look at tourism areas such as the Sunshine Coast, where Mooloolaba and Maroochydore together have a population of over 25,000, and Buderim has a population of over 25,000. This Government has discriminated against those communities by not giving them an input—a means of objecting to a legalised brothel in their community. If honourable members think it is hard enough to get

rid of mobile phone towers, they will have a fat chance under this legislation of getting rid of a legalised brothel down the end of the street. For the Government to say that it will keep it 200 metres away from churches and other such places neglects the fact that it is still going to be in people's community and it is still going to be expanding an industry well beyond what it currently is.

I would like to ask the Minister a question with regard to permits for adult entertainment and things such as lap dancing, which are to be attached to licensed premises. I ask the Minister: with regard to this permit, will there be any opportunity for public objection—any opportunity for the public to have their objections considered? I do not see it in the legislation. I would like his explanation on that.

I take it that someone who has gone through the process of demonstrating that they have a right to have a liquor licence can then later apply for this adult entertainment permit. I cannot see anything in the legislation about the public having another opportunity to object at that stage for that type of use of a licensed premises in their area. We already know that it is very difficult for communities who have concerns about certain liquor licences operating in their communities, but they do have an opportunity to object under certain provisions. I cannot see anything in this legislation that gives the community the right to object to an existing licensed premises by saying, "We don't want this type of entertainment in our local community." We already know that this operates in the CBD area. It is operating in a lot of areas in Brisbane and throughout the State, but what about people's opportunity to object to those permits? I cannot see it in the legislation. I would like to hear the Minister's explanation as to how he is going to consult with the public concerning that issue.

I have referred to the expansion of the industry in other States where the Government came in and said, "We've got to regulate it. Trust us. It's going to make us better," and it turned out to be worse. The Melbourne Age on 3 March stated—

"... over the past three days, and as the Attorney-General, Mrs Jan Wade, conceded yesterday, legislation has not prevented the growth of a substantial illegal sex industry. The number of unlicensed brothels in Melbourne is estimated to have trebled in the past 12 months, with more than 100 known to be operating. Worse, some provisions of the law, such as the ban on proprietorship of more than one brothel and the ban on proprietorship by people with criminal records, are clearly being flouted. Worst of all, the hope that the existence of safe brothels would gradually overcome the lure of street prostitution has not been fulfilled."

The article goes on to state—

"Victoria Police say the growth in illegal massage parlours is out of control, with more than 100 now operating across Melbourne—a three-fold increase in the past 12 months."

This is the use to which the Minister wants to put our police force—to try in vain to regulate a grossly expanded prostitution industry.

We have seen a 20% increase in crime on the Sunshine Coast. The Minister is not expanding our police force and resources by 20%, yet we have a situation in which the Minister wants to expend police resources on looking after an expanded prostitution industry. The police will never be able to cope with it, as has been demonstrated interstate. It has increased the illegal industry. There will be a so-called legal industry that continues to involve people with a criminal background and people with a drug-related background.

The Minister and the Government are going down a path that is a backward step for the status of women. It is a backward step for the status of young men as well. Many more lives will be destroyed because the Government has made it so much easier to get into this industry. The Government has now said, "We will make it legal. We will make it legitimate." Somehow they think that this is going to be all hearts, flowers and rose petals, and that the world is going to be a kinder, nicer place tomorrow and people of good character are going to come in and take charge of these new legalised brothels.

This is going to be a blight on the history of Queensland. It is interesting to note that, at a time when the Government is recognising 100 years of Labor Government and the influence of Labor establishments around the world, it is marking the occasion by passing in this House legislation that will increase the number of young people whose lives will be destroyed by an industry which is destructive. It is an industry which exists, but the Government is expanding it. It is going to destroy a lot of young lives.

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