



Speech by

Mr G. HEALY

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH

Hansard 23 March 1999

LIQUOR AMENDMENT BILL

Mr HEALY (Toowoomba North—NPA) (10.07 a.m.): I move—

"That the Bill be now read a second time."

On 11 March this Parliament rejected a motion moved by the member for Gladstone which would have entrenched in law the extreme importance and respect that all Queenslanders have for Anzac Day. That motion had called for all licensed premises, including cabarets, to restrict their trading hours to midnight on the eve of Anzac Day. The sentiments of that motion had partly been addressed in amendments to the Liquor Act proposed by the previous coalition Government in legislation tabled in the House prior to the last State election. Unfortunately, however, the motion, which had the support of the State coalition, was defeated. It may therefore seem strange to some members that a Bill to achieve the very same goal is now being introduced by myself with the member for Gladstone's total support and assistance in its preparation.

However, I think in hindsight all members would agree that half an hour was far too insignificant a time frame to debate such an important motion with such important implications about just how much we respect Anzac Day and all those who have served our nation. We should not forget that it is thanks to those who have served our nation that we can debate this Bill in a democratic environment where freedom of speech reigns supreme.

The introduction of this Bill provides an opportunity for all members of this Parliament to articulate their views and, more importantly, the views of their electorates. It is my hope that once this House has engaged in full and proper debate and analysed all the arguments for change, at least one member opposite will support the Bill and ensure it becomes law. After all, that is all it needs—just one member opposite to support the Bill.

The Liquor Amendment Bill 1999 seeks to amend the Liquor Act 1992 by replacing section 9(3) which relates to trading hours on the eve of Anzac Day. It is proposed that all liquor licences, including on-premises—cabaret—licences, cease at midnight on the day prior to Anzac Day. It is proposed that these premises be able to reopen from 1 p.m. on Anzac Day.

It is regrettable that this Bill has to be introduced at all. It is regrettable that this matter should become the subject of parliamentary debate. However, the sad reality is that in recent years there has been an increasing number of dawn services disrupted by unruly behaviour from people who are clearly intoxicated. The national importance that we all place on Anzac Day and the respect we expect all people to show for the people we remember on this day is far more important than three or four hours of commercial interests.

The omission of section 9(3) and its replacement with a new section 9(3) clarifies the approved hours of trading on Anzac Day. Anzac Day is recognised as one of three special days under the Act, along with Good Friday and Christmas Day, where trading is restricted. The new section 9(3) ensures that trading cannot go beyond midnight on 24 April. However, it does not mean that a licensed premises has to close and evict all patrons. The amendment will simply mean that the sale of alcohol must cease.

There is provision in this Bill, however, to allow the sale of alcohol between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. in special circumstances where a licensed premises may, for example, be holding a special function

where alcohol can be sold for consumption on the premises and to be consumed as part of a meal. Equally, there is special provision for the chief executive to approve particular cases where it may be deemed appropriate to allow the sale of alcohol between 6 a.m. and 1 p.m.—again on a licensed premises to be consumed on site in association with the consumption of a meal. Members of the Chamber will realise that these powers of exemption are necessary to avoid disrupting any legitimate Anzac Day functions.

The amendment is a legislative and appropriate gesture to the memory of those who fought and died for this country. This amendment sends a clear and unambiguous message to the community that the legislators of this State will do all that they can to uphold and protect the sanctity of the Anzac tradition. Again I thank the member for Gladstone for her support and input into the drafting of this Bill and I commend the Bill to the House.
