



Speech by

Mr G. HEALY

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH

Hansard 24 November 1999

LIQUOR AMENDMENT BILL

Mr HEALY (Toowoomba North—NPA) (9.37 p.m.), in reply: I thank all members of this Chamber for their contributions to this debate. The debate has been lengthy and, at times, very emotional. The member for Clayfield has already mentioned a couple of members from this side of the Chamber who have made excellent contributions. I make mention of the member for Burleigh in particular, who made an excellent contribution to the debate. I also make special mention of the members for Gregory and Toowoomba South and, indeed, the Leader of the Opposition.

I want to say from the start that the sentiments expressed by those on this side of the House have been expressed right from the heart. I make it quite clear that the introduction of this legislation was no stunt, as has been suggested by some members opposite. It had no politics or malice in it, and there was no secret agenda. This legislation was not merely a gesture. I know that some members of the Government would dearly love to support it, but of course they have been ordered not to. On an issue such as this, that is real shame.

Mr Borbidge: They should be given a conscience vote.

Mr HEALY: Yes, I believe that they should be given a conscience vote on this issue. In fact, I am quite surprised, because had this legislation been carried with bipartisan support, it would have been a real winner for both sides of politics.

At a time when the image of politicians and political parties is somewhat tarnished, this legislation would have given the general public the notion that we are a fairly caring bunch. Bipartisan support for this legislation would have not only helped to ensure that an incident did not happen to anyone on their way to an Anzac Day dawn service; it would have also sent a clear message to the community that 12 midnight was a pretty good and reasonable time to cease the sale of alcohol on the day before Anzac Day.

The Minister would be well aware by now of my family background in respect of liquor licensing. I know damned well that, if the grog is turned off, the people go home. If they want to party on, they usually do so by going to a private residence somewhere in the suburbs—usually well away from where a dawn service is likely to take place, thus eliminating the risk of disruption. I know that no legislation would enable us to give an ironclad guarantee that an incident could not take place in the future. Similarly, I know that with the Government not supporting this legislation, as it has indicated through several contributions from the other side of the House during this debate, there is no guarantee that an incident could not take place in the future. However, this legislation might have gone some way towards helping. It might have taken away the window of opportunity that some lout may have had to disrupt a dawn service in the future or to try to harass a group of diggers on their way to a dawn service. That is what this legislation is all about.

In the Minister's contribution to the debate, he said that he had conferred with local authorities on this issue. I remind the Minister that earlier this year the LGAQ State conference overwhelmingly passed a motion supporting this legislation. The notes accompanying the resolution, as they appeared in the agenda paper and order of proceedings for the Local Government Association conference in Toowoomba earlier this year, state—

"A recent vote in State Parliament was 45-44 against bringing on the amendment bill that would restrict nightclubs to 12 midnight trading on the eve of Anzac Day. The Speaker's vote prevented discussion on this important issue which was supported by the Association last year when raised by Gladstone City Council at the Annual Conference.

It has become practice over the last few years for intoxicated persons from nightclubs to jeer and harass ex-servicemen and women and their families, during the Anzac Day Dawn Service Parade in the main street of Gladstone. Only a few police are on duty which makes full control impossible. If this occurs in Gladstone, it would be occurring in other cities where 3.00am licences are operating in the central business district.

Anzac Day is a solemn occasion and intoxicated persons at dawn will inevitably act in a disorderly and disrespectful manner during services and parades. The R.S.L., police and ordinary citizens are disgusted at this type of behaviour, which includes calling out and jeering.

It would not be too much to ask the State Government to restrict licensed premises to close for Anzac Day morning, from 12.00 midnight to 1.00pm, allowing solemn services, parades and other activities to take place in a quiet and peaceful environment.

There has been much media comment in favour of the restriction and it is vital that the association keeps up the pressure for change."

This is the same conference which passed a motion supporting four-year terms for local government. What did we have yesterday in this House?

Mr Borbidge: They were quick to respond to that.

Mr HEALY: The Leader of the Opposition is right. What did we see in this House yesterday? The successful passage of legislation giving local authorities what they wanted!

With respect to any controversial legislation, individual members of Parliament must wear the consequences of their vote in their electorate. That is politics. We all know that. But I know one thing for sure: the only votes that will be lost in the electorates of members who vote in favour of this legislation will probably be those of a handful of nightclub or cabaret owners. I am confident of that. I believe the Government has read this one very badly. The Government's lack of support for this legislation will come back to haunt it.

There is no more sacred sound than that heard in cities and towns right across this great nation just before the sun rises each 25 April. It usually starts with the distant sound of the single beat of a snare drum. It is then followed by the squeak of shoes on bitumen and then the haunting sound of medals jingling. Many honourable members have heard that sacred sound and they know exactly what I am talking about. It is that very sacred sound that this legislation is trying to protect. Again, I thank all members on this side of the House who have contributed to this debate with passion and fervour.
