



Speech by

HARRY BLACK

MEMBER FOR WHITSUNDAY

Hansard 27 October 1999

LIQUOR AMENDMENT BILL

Mr BLACK (Whitsunday—ONP) (10.27 p.m.): I have much pleasure in rising tonight to support the Bill introduced by the member for Toowoomba North, which addresses the concerns originally voiced by the member for Gladstone. There is no more important day from our past heritage and our ongoing history than Anzac Day. Not only does this day provide the opportunity for us to remember the courage and sacrifice of our ex-servicemen and women, it also allows us to draw inspiration for the future. Those men and women were prepared to sacrifice all so that we who follow may enjoy the level of freedom that we have here today and will, hopefully, continue to enjoy in the future.

In the proud tradition of the diggers from World War I, World War II, Korea, Malaysia, Vietnam, the Gulf War and various other theatres, we now have another fine body of young men and women serving with courage and ability in East Timor. As Australians, we should be very proud and wish for their safe return.

Surely those people who have been prepared to put the defence of their nation and the security of their loved ones and fellow countrymen ahead of their own safety deserve the ability to remember their comrades in arms with dignity and without interruption. This process involves only one day in each year. The only sacrifice that is expected of the licensed premises and their patrons is to forgo but a few hours of trading. That is a small sacrifice indeed when compared to the sacrifices that have gone before. The sanctity of this national day of commemoration is far more important than the extra profits of a few hours trading or the few hours that allows a drinker to be converted into a drunken hooligan.

There is no intention to close the licensed premises or to send patrons home early. The only intention is to cease the sale of alcohol at a point at which there is less likelihood of drunken revellers interfering with the solemn remembrance which occurs at dawn services throughout our nation. Anzac Day is important not only to our returned servicemen and women but also to their families and thousands of other Australians. Most Australians have been touched in some way by the tragedy of war. Even those few who have not should be entitled to remember the sacrifice that secured our lifestyle. They should not have to endure the insane revelry of people who are intoxicated to the point of not caring for their fellow citizens and, by this stage, have no respect for the right of those who wish to observe this day of remembrance and gratitude to those who served.

There is absolutely no justification for allowing the extended trading hours to disrupt the solemn observance of Anzac Day. We have heard from members opposite that closing licensed premises at midnight will not help to curtail unruly behaviour at dawn services. That is a sweeping statement which defies logic. It is only natural that, if the drinking continues almost until the dawn services are commencing, the potential for disruption is increased markedly. It is in the extra few hours after midnight that inebriation is compounded to the point at which responsible behaviour disappears. I believe that we have the responsibility to ensure that on this one day of the year drinkers are not reduced to the state at which they are likely to insult the memory of those who have made the supreme sacrifice. I repeat that, if there is even one unpleasant incident, that is one incident too many. I strongly support this Bill.
