



Speech by

JACK PAFF

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PROSTITUTION BILL

Mr PAFF (Ipswich West—ONP) (5.28 p.m.): I rise to speak against this legislation—legislation similar to that introduced in other Australian States with the same justifications, but which has failed in those other States to achieve the so-called positive aims for which it was introduced. Queensland is no different. In his second-reading speech, the Minister mentioned the promotion of safety, the quality of life for local communities and safeguarding against corruption and organised crime. I do not believe that that will be the outcome. I would go so far as to say that the opposite is more likely to occur.

One of the biggest arguments in favour of this legislation is the safety of single-operator prostitutes and clients, the removal of the illegal element and the removal of the impact of prostitution on the community. None of these aims is achieved through further liberalisation of the prostitution laws. In fact, in other States where legal brothels have been established quite the opposite has occurred. The Melbourne Age of 3 March this year reported that the Victorian Attorney-General, Mrs Jan Wade, conceded—

"... legalisation 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 criminals 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. Victorian 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 ..."

In addition, Chief Inspector Ashby told the Melbourne Age—

"I suppose there was this utopian view that legalising prostitution would minimise street and illegal prostitution ... It clearly hasn't done that.

The proliferation contradicts Government assurance that the spread of illegal premises would be halted under the new prostitution laws."

If this further legalisation of prostitution would remove the criminal element and provide safety to the workers in the industry, why did it not achieve that in Victoria? Even more to the point, if the police are unable to enforce the current laws or to remove the current criminal element and provide safety to current workers in the industry, how will they ever do so with brothels? Will there be enough police to enforce the illegality of drugs or alcohol on the premises, the number of sex workers on the premises and other illegal activities? Will there be enough police to do these things on top of the number of police that will most certainly still be required to police the illegal prostitution that will function side by side with legal brothels? Will this Bill protect sex workers from exploitation, abuse and assault? No! It will do none of these things. It will achieve none of these aims.

The Victorian legislation was supposed to protect prostitutes, too. It was supposed to remove the criminal element. It was supposed to allow the industry to then become safe, to limit the spread of disease, to limit the amount of drugs, etc. This did not happen. I quoted before the Victorian Attorney-General stating simply that things have only become worse in Victoria. The legalisation has not prevented the growth of a substantial illegal sex industry, nor has it provided safety or the forlorn hope

that licensees will not have criminal pasts and connections. I have quoted a chief inspector of police saying that there was a utopian view that legalising prostitution would minimise street and illegal prostitution, and it clearly has not done that.

Prostitutes and former prostitutes also speak out about the existence of all of the illegalities that exist and thrive in the industry: the abuse of workers, the drug addiction, the drug trades, the exploitation, the lack of health safety, the abuse of all those legislated protections for more money—more and more money. That is what this industry is about, and it is because of the money flow that the abuse of the law will continue. The way in which to protect society and sex workers from this type of exploitation and danger is to do everything in our power to remove as much of it as we can from existence and to provide help to those trapped within it. I will read from a letter. It states—

"Queensland should not make the same mistake as Victoria, which legalised brothels in 1995 and now has both a legal and an illegal industry working side by side. According to your government's Review of Prostitution Laws in Queensland Discussion Paper published in November 1998, there are now 138 legal and up to 50 illegal prostitution service providers in Victoria, compared with a total of 100 prior to legislation—an 88% increase over three years! The evidence is clear that legalisation leads to a proliferation of prostitution, not its control or containment."

This comment was made in a letter to the Premier by the leaders of most of the major Christian churches in Queensland and forwarded to me by the Family Council of Queensland. I am sure that all honourable members received this letter. The arguments that are raised in it are very valid and I agree wholeheartedly with them.

I refer to an article in a magazine called Focus in August 1999. Mrs Roslyn Phillips of the Festival of Light said—

"Mr Beattie's arguments (that this legislation is needed to stop police corruption and the murders of single prostitutes), do not make sense. Solo prostitutes are still being bashed and murdered in NSW—where brothels are now legal. There are fewer problems in South Australia where brothels are illegal. And if police are corrupt, legalising brothels won't solve a thing. Police can be just as corrupt while pretending to enforce Mr Beattie's 'strict' regulations. All the new law would do is encourage more young women and girls to become trapped in the degrading prostitution trade!"

The truth of this woman's statement is only commonsense. It is quite obvious that this Bill will in no way stop police corruption and the murders of single prostitutes. Those single prostitutes are still going to be unprotected, and the regulation of an industry does not stop any type of corruption, especially police corruption. No person on the street—and obviously prostitutes themselves—would believe that.

I have heard the Logan City Council's response to the discussion paper mentioned several times. I have also looked at that review and I agree with its opinion. I heard a member from the Labor side of the House argue that it is only the opinion of two Logan City councillors. I say to that person—I think it may have been the member for Logan, actually—that whether or not it is simply the view of only two Logan City councillors is of no importance to this debate. The document is titled and is written as a response by the Logan City Council. It says—

"The Logan City Council asserts the further liberalisation of prostitution law will have a dramatic negative impact upon the local community and its social fabric through the normalisation and legalising of previously illegal activities."

It does not say that it is a response written by two members of the Logan City Council; it says the Logan City Council. The arguments submitted in it are not only well set out and sourced; they make sense. I commend the Logan City Council for its outright disapproval of this Bill.

There are many, many issues involved in this debate and far more arguments against the legalisation of this disgusting industry. Not only does the further legalisation of prostitution degrade society, but it also degrades sex workers and it implies acceptance of an industry which is not acceptable and which is rife with corruption, drugs, deceit, abuse and criminal activity. In the interests of teaching our children good morals, in the interests of the family unit, in the interests of Queensland, I urge members of this House to learn from the disastrous New South Wales and Victorian examples and not to make the same mistake in Queensland.

I have heard a lot of talk about allowing conscience votes on this issue. It disgusts me that the institution of Parliament, of democracy, is ignored in such a way that members of Parliament who are supposed to represent the people need permission to vote in the way their electorates would wish them to vote. As members of this House, we are elected first to represent our electorate, then to represent our State. I did not realise that representing what their parliamentary leader or the party hierarchy wants is the No. 1 priority of the Labor Party members of the Legislative Assembly.

I will give honourable members one more quote from the Courier-Mail of 25 November this year. It states—

"Member for Bulimba Pat Purcell said yesterday the Bill was not necessary, would not make sex workers safer and would only attract more players into the industry."

I look forward to hearing the contribution of the member for Bulimba in this debate. I am even more interested in seeing how the member for Bulimba will vote. The argument that he does not agree with this Bill but has to vote according to party lines is simply not a good enough excuse. That is a sad state of affairs for democracy.

The entire purpose of this Bill is defeated by the Bill itself. Further legislation will not address the problems, only exacerbate them. One Nation in no way supports the legalisation of prostitution or the further liberalisation of prostitution laws. This legislation is bad for Queensland and bad for the future of our society.

Mr Barton: Is this the disciplined party position or are you all free to vote how you want?

Mr PAFF: I take the Minister's interjection, but there are two former police officers in this House. I worked in this field some years ago. The Minister should listen to what the people on this side of the House are saying. The Minister is not listening to us.

Ms Bligh: Being moralised by the member for Ipswich West is pretty extraordinary, given his previous behaviour.

Mr PAFF: The Minister's morals are well known right throughout the State.
