



Speech by

**Mr M. HORAN**

**MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA SOUTH**

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Hansard 27 October 1999

### LIQUOR AMENDMENT BILL

**Mr HORAN** (Toowoomba South—NPA) (9.47 p.m.): One of the things that has come through in this debate tonight and on the previous occasions when we have debated this legislation is that every one of the 89 members in this Parliament feels the same about Anzac Day. Everyone acknowledges its sacredness and its importance. I guess we can only describe Anzac Day as one of the most special and sacred days in the year for all of us.

There are some people in this House who are very intimately involved in this issue through members of their family. Others of us have had close friends in theatres of war such as Vietnam who have been lost or who were injured. Others have grandfathers and fathers who were involved. Often our involvement is a matter of history and timing—just how old people were at the time certain things happened in the world or, for many of us, whether we drew the marble. Overall, there is the utmost respect for Anzac Day in this House.

I do not think we should denigrate this debate by delving into politics. I guess I should not debate what the Minister said—that we did nothing and so forth—but I think our shadow Minister will speak on that issue. Regardless of how this has come about, we are now at a point where we have all argued about this matter on two or three occasions this year. The one thing that has come out, through thick and thin, has been our highest regard and respect for Anzac Day.

There are really two issues in this debate. One is the issue of hours of trading for licensed premises on the eve of Anzac Day and the disturbances that have occurred in a few places in this State. The other issue that has evolved throughout this year as we have discussed this issue in this House has been a general overwhelming feeling of the sacredness of Anzac Day and the desire to maintain and preserve it so that there is something else that makes this day special for future generations, particularly for those in their late teens and early 20s.

The previous speaker in this debate mentioned Rockhampton. Some members have said that nothing has occurred at Anzac Day services in their towns. And that is true; nothing has occurred in some places. But this legislation had its genesis in an ugly, nasty incident that occurred at Surfers Paradise. We have heard the member for Gladstone talk about the closeness in that town of two nightclubs to the RSL, where the dawn service is held. In Toowoomba, which is represented by my colleague Graham Healy and I, a dawn service is held on the edge of the range, well out of the CBD. So we are perhaps in a different circumstance with regard to the trouble that might be caused in other towns and cities where dawn services are held right in the midst of the town.

For all of us, as members of Parliament, perhaps our love of Anzac Day has increased substantially, because we now have to attend Anzac Day functions in our electorates, where we stand back humbly and let the diggers and their families take their rightful positions in those parades and services. No doubt, all members would think very highly of Anzac Day.

I reflect on one service in Toowoomba which is held at Drayton, on the south-western outskirts of Toowoomba. It is a lovely little service involving a march from the hall up to the monument. Over the years, that service has centred around the children of the Drayton school, St Anthony's convent and the Darling Heights school, and particularly the Scouts, Girl Guides, Cub Scouts and Brownies. The returned servicemen who march in that parade regard it as a very special service, even though it is not a big

service—unlike the main service and the main march in the city. But what has always struck me about that service is what it means to those young people and how they are developing their pride in Anzac Day. Through the various speeches that are given at those services each year, they learn a little about Anzac Day. A representative of their school lays a wreath or a book on the monument at Drayton. One can see a feeling for, and love of, Anzac Day developing and growing within our community.

As for the older children in the secondary school, there are some marvellous services. St Joseph's secondary school has started one. All the schools get together at the mothers memorial and take part in a service, generally the day before Anzac Day. A number of other schools, including the Newtown school in my colleague's electorate, have wonderful services. As I said, one can see the spirit and feeling for Anzac Day that is developing in our primary and secondary schools.

The member for Rockhampton spoke about the issue of grog and whether or not, if its sale is cut off at 12, that would make any difference. One does not have to look back too far to a time when pubs used to close at 6. Then they used to close at 10. We now live in an era where, for the last 15 years or so, licensed premises have been allowed to trade until 2, 3 or 5 o'clock in the morning. That makes a real difference in some places. I do not think that any member is saying that these problems happen everywhere, but in some places problems have occurred. And if, in the last two years, there have been only two or three incidents, is that not two or three incidents too many? So there is that aspect regarding the strict practicalities of the law.

I think a number of members have asked, "What is wrong with closing at midnight?" I doubt that any of the cabaret owners or nightclub owners would regret, in financial terms, what they might lose if they closed then. They would realise the sanctity and the sacredness of Anzac Day. There are really no problems with that; there are only positives.

The feeling for Anzac Day is tremendous, and we should do anything we can to ensure that that feeling remains and grows and is nurtured and lasts forever. Only a few returned servicemen are left from World War I, and there are dwindling numbers amongst those who served during World War II. As they pass on, the torch can be taken up by the younger members of our communities, thereby keeping this day very, very special.

Let us reflect generally on the other two days when arrangements similar to this are in place, namely, Good Friday and Christmas Day or Christmas Eve. I think all of us would realise that, somehow or other, the fact that the grog gets turned off at a certain time and its sale does not go on and on into the night adds to the overall aura and stature of those two days. Most of us who live in country towns have kids who come home at holiday times. They want to go out with their mates, but on Christmas Eve they will say, "No, they close at 12, anyway. We want to go to midnight mass. We need to get home by 10 o'clock", or something like that.

**Mr Schwarten:** Your kids were never disruptive, were they?

**Mr HORAN:** No. But those particular arrangements enhance and develop the stature of those two particular days—Christmas Day and Good Friday—and the nights before.

There are no wins or losses for any of us, as members of Parliament, in the debate on this issue. We all truly believe in Anzac Day, and none of us would want to do anything that in any way damages the day or in any way makes the celebration by the returned servicemen and women any less sacred, pleasant and happy for them when they are meeting their friends. I feel a bit frustrated that this whole issue has become political. We should be able to sit around the table and say, "Just forget that you are on that side and we are on this side." Is this all worth while, simply because one side started it and the other side took a position? I believe that, if we were all asked quietly and secretly, in our hearts we would feel that perhaps this is the least that we can do. The current arrangements for the sale of liquor on Anzac Day are different from those in the past, when the pubs closed at 6 or 10.

We have many debates in this Chamber during which members earnestly ask those opposite to reconsider. We are all hard headed enough to know that politics is politics. I have never seen anyone change their mind in this place. But tonight's debate provides the opportunity to perhaps put aside our differences and just vote accordingly. I do not believe that this should be a political issue.

As I have said over and over again, all 89 members in this House believe in Anzac Day and feel very strongly about it. Only one member of this House is a returned service person, that is, the member for Fitzroy, and we hold him in high regard. We all love Anzac Day for different reasons—getting together with friends, family or our own communities.

**An Opposition member:** And Redlands.

**Mr HORAN:** And the member for Redlands, as well, I am sorry.

This debate gives members a chance to think about this honourably. I believe in my heart that the sacred memory and the important status of Anzac Day, particularly in the hearts and minds of our younger generations, could only be enhanced by this legislation. If the House decided to vote that way,

I do not think anybody would feel smug or political about it. This is a chance for members to do something about Anzac Day at a time when nightclubs and pubs stay open until much later than they ever did before. I hope that the House looks at this sincerely and honourably and takes this chance to do something for those who fought for our freedom.

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