



Speech by

Mr P. PURCELL

MEMBER FOR BULIMBA

Hansard 2 December 1999

PROSTITUTION BILL

Mr PURCELL (Bulimba—ALP) (12.06 p.m.): I do not need to tell any honourable member that the issue we are debating today generates strong emotions. I hold very strong views about prostitution and I have expressed those views in the process that has resulted in the Bill we are considering today. In common with many people, I would like to live in a perfect world where prostitutes do not exist, just as I would like to live in a world where there were no wars, poverty or hunger and coalition Governments were honest. My views are a result of my upbringing and experience. I happen to believe that nobody should have to work as a prostitute. But they do and they will continue to do so. I happen to believe that nobody should use the services of prostitutes, but they do and they will continue to do so.

We and Parliaments all over the world pass laws on prostitution, just as we pass laws on drugs or drink-driving. People still peddle and take drugs. People still drink-drive. I do not think that anybody would pretend that this legislation answers all of the questions that many of us have about how to handle this issue. I do not know of any Government that has produced legislation that answers everybody's concerns. As everybody recognises, this is an issue that has been around for hundreds and, some say, thousands of years. My concern is that we should not do anything that could be seen to encourage young women or men to enter prostitution. We should not make that type of work seem more attractive. I am assured by the Minister that this legislation is not designed to do that. In addition, I am pleased that my major concern has been addressed by the Minister.

The Bill provides support for those choosing to break out of prostitution. This is a fundamental principle that should be supported by everybody in this Chamber. It is also in line with the United Nations resolution calling on Governments to do whatever they can to reduce the slavery and exploitation of prostitutes. I know of examples of women who are hooked on prostitution for money or drugs. It is up to our society to extend a hand to support them if they choose to get out of that downward spiral. I doubt whether anyone inside or outside this Chamber believes that prostitution is a glamorous or lucrative occupation.

The movie *Pretty Woman* was not a documentary. We all know that people enter into prostitution for a range of reasons. The main one is money. That comes through loudly and clearly when we talk to anybody involved in prostitution. I agree with the member for Archerfield that part of the answer is to widen the opportunities for women to take up occupations other than prostitution. That involves providing greater employment opportunities, better job security and better wages. I recognise the Government's efforts in that direction. It is no secret that I have reservations about whether this legislation will achieve its stated outcomes. However, I am assured by the Minister that this legislation is the best way to go.

Some Opposition members may try to make mischief about my attitude. Let me just repeat that I have had my say on this legislation. I had my say with the Premier before the legislation was considered by caucus. I have had my say directly to the Minister. I have had my say in caucus, along with all other members on this side of the House. I have had my say here today, and I accept the majority decision of caucus.

We all have to accept the decisions of this Parliament. Acceptance of the majority decision is the basis of our system of democratic government. The Minister has had to take into account a wide range of views in drafting this Bill, and I did not envy him his job. I have to be honest and say that I still hold reservations, but I am prepared to give this legislation a go. I sincerely hope that my concerns are proved groundless.