



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR LOCKYER

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.

Dr PRENZLER (Lockyer—ONP) (10 p.m.): I rise in support of the Liquor Amendment Bill 1999. This Bill disallows the selling of alcohol after midnight on the day before Anzac Day so that drunken and boisterous people leaving night spots in the early hours of the morning do not interrupt dawn services. On the other hand, the legislation allows restaurants, under certain circumstances, to sell alcohol in conjunction with meals at certain times.

Anzac Day is probably Australia's most important national day. It marks the anniversary of the first major military action fought by Australian and New Zealand troops during the First World War. After World War II, Anzac Day became a day of remembrance for soldiers killed in both the great wars, and later for soldiers who died in the Korean and Vietnam Wars, and soldiers whom we have since lost in peacekeeping operations throughout the world.

Anzac Day is a day for all of us to remember the important contribution made by Australian men and women who served in times of war. We also remember the 102,000 Australians who gave their lives fighting for this country which we love so much. One thing we must never forget is that Anzac Day helps us to understand and learn about some of the experiences of our servicemen. This will help to ensure that those special people continue to be honoured and, most importantly, respected in our communities.

I would like to share with honourable members an excerpt from a letter from a World War I veteran who fought on the shores of Gallipoli. This man actually landed at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915 and he wrote this account to his childhood sweetheart, Vera. His words will reinforce why Anzac Day is such a respected day in this country. He wrote—

"When our boat grounded we jumped out almost up to our hips in the water and made for the beach. The order was given to fix bayonets, open out and advance. Ahead of us was a steep hill covered with thick undergrowth, forming excellent cover for the enemy and also for ourselves, but not bullet-proof.

As far as we could see, the country was all hills and hollows covered with the same thick undergrowth with a few clumps of trees here and there. On our left the firing was fairly heavy and continuous so the party I was with moved in that direction and we were soon in the thick of it. By this time, many British battleships had opened fire on the Turkish forts and the noise was awful—I have never heard thunder to equal it.

The Turks, with whom were many Germans, took up a strong position behind a ridge. There were many thousands of them and they easily outnumbered us, having plenty of artillery and machine guns while all we had was our rifle fire. Our artillery had not been able to get ashore, while our machine guns were late in coming—and there was only one or two, so you see the advantage they had over us was indeed great.

Their fire was getting absolutely murderous, but our chaps advanced again and again, and were dropping in all directions, but would not be stopped. That Sunday (April 25) should live in history, for the Australians proved what stuff they were made of and many a one made a hero of himself. And many a poor fellow died urging his mates onward with his last breath. The hail of bullets was simply awful and the shrapnel shells were bursting around us all the time—they must have expended a marvellous amount of ammunition.

Many of our officers were shot down and most of the time we got no orders at all, but had to rely on ourselves to do the best we could. Whenever we did happen to see an officer the order was always the same, 'Get ahead lads and stick it into them.' "

Thousands of Australian men died in the hours, days and weeks that followed the landing on the shores of Gallipoli. What followed the landing is a story of courage and endurance, of death and despair, of poor leadership and unsuccessful strategies.

While our political leaders argued back in Australia, Australian soldiers died in battle from sniper fire and shelling. Those who lived suffered from a range of ailments due to their dreadful living conditions—typhus, large infestations of lice, gangrene in their wounds, lack of fresh water, poor quality food and poor sanitary conditions. All this took a deadly toll.

Dr Frank Bongiorno, a research fellow at the Australian National University suggests that when Australia went to war in 1915 many white Australians believed that their Commonwealth had no history, that it was not yet a true nation and that its most glorious days still lay ahead of it. James Brunton Stephens proclaimed in 1877, "She is not yet."

Unfortunately, in our western culture, sacrificial death—blood sacrifice—was widely recognised as the foundation of nationhood, and Gallipoli seemed to fit the bill. At the same time, Gallipoli

expressed Australians' sense of a dual loyalty, namely loyalty to Australia and to the empire of which Australia was a part. Australians were fighting for their Commonwealth, but they were also fighting for their empire. At that time they were "independent Australian Britons".

Anzac Day has been observed as a public holiday in all Australian States each year since approximately 1920. Traditionally, Anzac Day is marked by dawn services held at war memorials around Australia and New Zealand, followed later in the morning by parades of past and present members of the armed services.

In light of what I have just mentioned, I believe that legislating for licensed premises to restrict their trading hours to midnight on Anzac Day eve is a very small sacrifice to make in comparison to the sacrifices that our Australian soldiers, sailors, airmen and women made for the freedom of our great nation. The preservation of Anzac Day ceremonies—in particular the dawn services—from being disrupted by intoxicated individuals is the least we can do to honour our soldiers and to pay our respects to the many lives that were lost or changed because of the effects of war.

As the member for Toowoomba South has stated quite categorically, over the past decade or so drinking laws in Australia have changed. Previously, midnight closings were unheard of; 3 a.m. closings were unbelievable; and 10 o'clock closings were the norm. Unfortunately, over the past 10 years things have changed considerably in this State. If we put our dawn services in the situation where they cannot be disrupted by drunken and boisterous individuals we will be doing a great service to our returned servicemen. If we cannot have one-half of a day without alcohol sales in order to have peaceful surrounds in which to honour our brave men and women, we will become a shameful and disrespectful country.

One Nation proudly supports this Bill and urges all members of this House to do the same. I believe that anyone voting against this Bill will clearly demonstrate his or her disrespect for our soldiers, for our Anzac Day ceremonies and for the citizens of this State. I commend the Bill to the House.
