



Speech by

**Mr T. MALONE**

**MEMBER FOR MIRANI**

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Hansard 10 November 1999

### **LIQUOR AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mr MALONE** (Mirani—NPA) (10.11 p.m.): Tonight it gives me great pleasure to speak to the Liquor Amendment Bill, which has been brought into the House by the member for Toowoomba North. Honourable members on both sides of the Chamber have recognised that politics should not have a place in the debate on this Bill. Unfortunately, it seems like a bit of a game is being played. We might have thought that commonsense would prevail and that this Bill would be passed quickly through this Chamber. Unfortunately, at the last election there was a huge anti-politician swing. The things we do in this House are treated with scepticism by the general population. For example, Bills such as this one, which should go through the House quickly, seem to be held up and, at the end of the day, commonsense does not seem to prevail.

It seems strange to me that there is opposition to any practical move to help maintain and encourage participation in Anzac Day, which is one of the most important days of remembrance in this State. In recent years, we have seen an upsurge of interest in this day, which is one of celebration as well as one of remembrance. Throughout the State people are responding in greater numbers and showing their appreciation of the sacrifices made by so many people—men and woman—who fought overseas to protect this country and many others who worked for and supported this country at home during years of conflict. We give them official recognition on one day of the year. Many people recognise the contribution that these heroes make and privately thank them every day of the year. From time to time all of us reflect on what a lucky country we are. Were it not for the contribution made by our Army, Navy and Air Force during previous conflicts, we might not have been so lucky. Officially, we give them recognition on just one day of the year.

The licensed premises referred to in this amendment can operate 363 days of the year. They have a 363 to one advantage over Anzac Day. This amendment will not even change that advantage. However, based on the reaction of this Government, especially that from the Minister and his office, people could be forgiven for thinking that this was an all-out bid to close them down completely. This amendment seeks to limit by the barest amount—I repeat: by the barest amount—the hours for serving alcohol at nightclubs and some other licensed premises in an effort to help maintain the enjoyment and the dignity of dawn services that signal the beginning of that very special day. Unfortunately, there have been some incidents—I repeat: some incidents—that have interfered with the Anzac Day program in a few areas. The amendment Bill seeks to address that issue before it becomes a bigger one. As I have said, there is no big drama at present, and the people who support this amendment are not trying to turn this into one. The problem is not widespread yet. Certainly, in my electorate, which has many country areas, that is not the case. However, in the more urbanised areas, such as Mackay, which is part of my electorate, there have been a couple of instances over the past couple of years. We certainly hope that it will never become a major problem.

This amendment is a preventive measure. It is a very minor change and a move to head off what is seen by many people as a potentially serious threat to the conduct of the day. However, it now appears that the serious threats are looming—and I am speaking not politically but from fact—from the office of the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing. People who have supported the move to protect Anzac Day are now being threatened with recrimination by his office if they do not change their stance and support him. The standover tactics that have worked so well for him in the past are being introduced again. Why should the people who want to protect the sanctity of one day of the year be

subjected to this type of behaviour? Why is it deemed necessary by the Minister's office to bully these people and threaten them when the rest of the State spends this one day of the year thanking them? It is my understanding that nightclubs and other similar premises can serve alcohol until the early hours of the morning on all but two days of the year. They are treated very generously, and the people who frequent these establishments are able to enjoy the entertainment at these facilities to their heart's content.

Several times in the past it has been stated that some patrons may pose a threat or become a source of annoyance to people attending dawn services on Anzac Day. There might have been only a few instances up till now, but in the years ahead there is potential for many more disruptions. As anyone who has attended a dawn service, as I have, would know, it takes only the stupid actions of a few thoughtless individuals to take away the dignity of the service. In years past, dawn services attracted mainly older members of the community. Declining numbers certainly were of concern. I guess a solemn dignified dawn service did not rate highly with the majority of younger people. Thankfully, these days the number of attendees at dawn services appears to be increasing each year, with the numbers being boosted by children and teenagers. Certainly, as the previous speaker has indicated, cadets are becoming a bigger and bigger part of the Anzac Day parades. Family groups are attending Anzac Day parades. As the ranks of world war diggers gradually diminish, they are being replaced by even greater numbers of servicemen and women from more recent conflicts.

There is no intention through this amendment Bill to impose unfair or unreasonable restrictions on any young people who enjoy nightclubs. All we are asking through this amendment is that on one day of the year they give up just a few hours of drinking time—that is all. They can still stay there and dance or do whatever they normally do, but they cannot drink alcohol for just a few hours in the very early hours of Anzac Day morning.

The Government's response to this proposal is to bring out the big stick and threaten supporters of this significant, once-a-year event. The Government sees no need to impose a few hours of restraint on one section of the community but seems to have no qualms about bullying and threatening the other section, which of course is the organisers of Anzac Day.

On Anzac Day it is well known that some diggers enjoy a rum with their cornflakes or, quite often, just the rum without the cornflakes. They gather at their RSL clubs and other premises in the early hours of the morning on that very special day, preparing for the remembrance and celebration of not just one event but many famous and infamous events of our history. This morning the Minister stood up in the House with feigned indignation, claiming his office did not make any threats concerning the tradition of having a rum with cornflakes on Anzac Day; the very thought of the use of bullyboy tactics were abhorrent to him. At least he is sticking rigidly to the Government's method of operation in blaming somebody else for the Government's blunders. This time apparently it was a journalist's fault. It was bad reporting. His office would not use threats—no way. Maybe the paper got it wrong. "Don't blame us, blame somebody else."

I am one of the most trusting and believing members of this House and, unfortunately, I could not accept the Minister's assurances this morning. His past performances in this place and elsewhere would indicate that he is not above the use of strongarm tactics when he thinks that he might benefit from their use. In fact, the Minister has often bathed in the glory of his ability to get his own way not just in this House but in other forums one way or the other.

In April this year the Minister earned the wrath of the community by comparing diggers who had rum with their cornflakes on Anzac Day to people who had been out drinking all night and into the early hours of the morning at nightclubs and other licensed premises. The criticism was unjustified and certainly still is. The Minister must be smarting from the criticism that he copped because this time he did not just insult the diggers with a few badly chosen words; he picked up a copy of the licensing Act and threatened to belt them over the head with it!

The very fact that we have to debate this amendment in this House is an indictment on this Government. As I said earlier, what should have been a simple and logical thing has become a major issue.

**Mr Swarten** interjected.

**Mr MALONE:** I listened to the speech of the member for Rockhampton, and I think that he would have been better off reading it.

**Mr Swarten:** I'd read it a bloody sight better than you're reading that, I'll give you the drum.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Mickel): Order! The Minister's term is unparliamentary. I ask him to withdraw it.

**Mr MALONE:** The Minister is interjecting from the wrong seat, Mr Deputy Speaker.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! I ask the Minister to withdraw the term.

**Mr Swarten:** What term are you worried about?

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The expression. I do not want to get into an argument. The member will just withdraw it.

**Mr Schwarten:** I withdraw.

**Mr MALONE:** Thank you for your protection, Mr Deputy Speaker.

What should be a simple and logical thing has become an issue only because the Government would not act to ensure the safety and dignity of thousands of people who attend Anzac Day dawn services. In my electorate Anzac Day dawn services are held in numerous centres big and small from Marlborough in the south, to Mackay in the north and up to Finch Hatton in the Pioneer Valley, through the western areas out around Nebo and, of course, Glenden and out to Coppabella. As I said earlier, many of those places would not be affected because they are not in the vicinity of nightclubs and other premises where the problem might occur. It is always interesting to attend those services because the people there are genuine and they work hard to ensure that their dawn services and their parades run smoothly. The services are certainly well attended, as I said earlier, by cadets, schoolchildren and others.

Everyone associated with Anzac Day regards the dawn services with a lot of respect and reverence. It is the one day of the year that people remember with pride and sorrow, the one day of the year that people get together to ensure that this nation never forgets the sacrifices that have been made by so many people. Nobody wants the services marred by idiots who are full of booze and bad manners. Nobody wants their physical presence threatened. Nobody wants the atmosphere ruined.

**Mr Schwarten:** Is Hatton in your electorate?

**Mr MALONE:** Absolutely!

**Mr Schwarten** interjected.

**Mr MALONE:** It certainly has.

**Ms Spence:** What about Nebo?

**Mr Schwarten:** Nebo? People standing around drunk, abusing people?

**Mr MALONE:** If the Minister had listened to what I had said and had interjected from his correct seat—

**Mr Schwarten:** I am. I am in charge of this Bill at the moment. You will learn that.

**Mr Rowell:** They left him in charge of the Blood Bank. Heaven help us.

**Mr MALONE:** That is a worry.

**Mr Schwarten:** It is a worry when you are making those sorts of statements about me interjecting from the wrong seat.

**Mr MALONE:** If the Minister had listened to what I was saying, he would know that I was saying that those problems rarely come about during the dawn parades at Nebo; it is in the areas adjacent to nightclubs where the problems arise.

**Mr Schwarten** interjected.

**Mr MALONE:** The last time I looked there were no nightclubs in Nebo.

**Ms Spence:** I lived there. I lived in Calen.

**Mr MALONE:** Calen is not in my electorate, as the Minister well knows. It is a pity that these Government members do not realise where the boundaries of electorates are.

**Mr Schwarten:** You've got top people in Longreach, top people in Rocky.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Dr Clark): Order! The member will continue his speech.

**Mr MALONE:** When the interjections cease, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am not speaking until this nonsense stops.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! If the member is not going to take interjections, perhaps he should desist and we can get on with it. The member will please continue.

**Mr MALONE:** One of the most heartening aspects of being a member of Parliament is attending events such as the one that I will be attending on Saturday, that is, the passing out parade of the 131 RCU in Sarina. That cadet unit has been in operation for 25 years. They are doing a wonderful job. The commander in charge of that unit has passed the age limit.

**Mr Schwarten** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister will cease interjecting.

**Mr MALONE:** Because of a change to the Act, Paul Carroll, who has been in charge of the unit for quite a long time, is able to continue on in that role. I pay tribute to Paul for the work that he has done over many years in establishing that cadet unit and for the wonderful cadets who have been a

part of that unit. They invariably turn up to Anzac Day parades and work hard to ensure that the diggers are looked after. They travel on the bus from Sarina down to Carmila and to St Lawrence and back again and take part in the parade in Sarina at 10.30.

It is with great pleasure that I speak to this amendment Bill, even though I realise that some members on the other side of the House want to make a joke of it.

**Mr Swarten:** This is not a joke.

**Mr MALONE:** If the member for Rockhampton would desist from making comments, we might get some sense out of this debate.

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