



Speech by

**Mrs D. PRATT**

**MEMBER FOR BARAMBAH**

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Hansard 3 October 2000

### **PROSTITUTION LEGISLATION**

**Mrs PRATT** (Barambah—IND) (6.31 p.m.): It gives me pleasure to speak in support of the motion moved by the member for Gladstone. Once again she has shown her desire to have all people and all communities treated in a fair, equal and just manner. The inclusion of the particular clause that we are debating in the original legislation defied logic at the time. At that time many mayors voiced their disapproval at not being able to put to their councils and have local government decide on what they believe is in the best interests of their own communities—communities they know and understand better than members in this House who perhaps did not even know they existed. It is with unbelievable arrogance that this Government states that a town with a population of 24,999 can decide for itself whether or not brothels can be established in their community but a community of 25,001 cannot decide for themselves. It brings to mind the Animal Farm mentality—some animals are more equal than others, but in this case big is less capable than small.

The effects of establishing or allowing to be established a facility such as a brothel will and must have the same impact on any community and its members, whether big or small. It must also reflect how the community sees itself. If a mayor and council choose to lead their community on a particular path, it surely reflects the will of those residents who elected the individual members to their offices. The residents of a community know their mayors or councillors more intimately than any member of a Government, and if the mayor and councillors direct the community down an avenue to which they object, the community members will very soon let them know at the next local government elections.

It should not be this Government's overriding desire to take that right away from the people when it is their own community. Every community, every shire, every electorate is different, as is evident by the widely diverse representatives who sit in this Chamber. Not all large communities want their right to choose taken away. They do not want their right to fight for their community's wishes overridden. This open, accountable and community consultative Government should not have a problem with the desire of local governments—regardless of size—to make their own decisions on this particular matter.

This Government may very well believe that legalising brothels is okay. It has in fact proved that by passing the relevant Bill with the help of three of its own members who stood openly in this Chamber and voiced their objection and opposition to the Bill but who, when put to the test, backed down and voted for it. The arguments for the legalisation of brothels were put forward by many politicians, police officers, public health experts and even some ministers of religion, but there were just as many in those occupations who also live in the communities who argued against the legislation. That proves how split communities are on this particular legislation.

Article 6 of the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, which was signed by Australia in 1981, states—

"... prostitution, even when willingly engaged in by a prostitute, is a violation of the Human Rights of all women. It is a predatory, exploitative vice, which preys on the vulnerability of others with serious social consequences."

So I must ask why it is that this Government would not support the motion of the member for Gladstone, which allows a local government of any size to uphold Article 6 of the UN convention.

I ask this Government to accept the motion moved by the member for Gladstone, for to do otherwise is discriminatory. To do otherwise is to infringe on the right of a local government to govern its community as directed by the people in that community. It is the overriding of a community's will to protect itself as a whole and its individuals from what they may feel is an undesirable establishment. The establishment of a brothel may contravene the future direction of a local government, or there may be some other reason the local government may deem relevant. Surely it is every community's right to fight for its beliefs and it is every local government's right to fight for its community's best interests. I support the motion moved by the member for Gladstone.

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