Speech by

Mr L. SPRINGBORG

MEMBER FOR WARWICK

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PENALTIES AND SENTENCES AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

Mr SPRINGBORG (Warwick—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (3.35 p.m.): I would just like to outline at the outset that the Opposition will be supporting this legislation, but we will be raising some issues throughout the course of the afternoon. The involvement of Aboriginal elders or community justice groups in the criminal justice system in Queensland is a very, very important consideration for members of Parliament because I think it is a very progressive step which should be encouraged to break the cycle of crime that permeates many Aboriginal communities. The cycle of crime, of course, does not permeate only indigenous— Aboriginal and Islander—communities around Queensland. Certainly we have significant problems in other places, but I think it is fair to say that what is experienced in indigenous communities is at a greater level than what we see in the general community.

It is also fair to say that the ATSI community throughout Australia makes up around 2% of the population. However, I think its representation in our prison population is around 25%. So honourable members can see that there is a significant overrepresentation of ATSI people in prisons. That also gives the lie to the comment that we hear very much around the State from time to time that it is almost impossible to prosecute an ATSI person. There is this perception that they do not necessarily go to jail. People have only to look at the figures to see quite clearly that that is not true.

At the end of the day we need to consider that there is a set of standards that we all need to uphold in the community, that we all need to have a value system which quite clearly determines the difference between right and wrong. At the end of the day people decide for themselves what they are going to do in the area of crime. The way that we respond as a State and the way that we respond as a Government or as a Parliament is something that I suppose we need to consider given the circumstances, given the best evidence and also given the experiences to date. I think that has probably led to the presentation of this legislation to the Parliament.

Up until recent times there has been a situation in which community justice groups, funded through the office of Minister Spence, have been involved in some of those areas at a lower level. As I understand it, to date they have been able to provide sentencing alternatives to magistrates in non-serious cases. This Bill basically seeks to elevate that one step further and to involve community justice groups, which generally comprise leaders in the Aboriginal community—that is elders and other eminent people within the community—in providing sentencing recommendations to judges in the higher court. I think that that is a sensible amendment. It is certainly something that I advocated very strongly in January of this year. There are a few things, though, on which we do differ with the Government, but it is not enough for us to oppose aspects of the legislation. Nevertheless, we wish to put those on record.

Respect for one's traditional elders, respect for one's traditional way of life and respect for one's customary law is very important in those communities, particularly those ATSI communities which are still very much knitted together. It is more difficult for this system to work when there has been a degree of fragmentation and urbanisation around Queensland and further afield. However, where there is still a very strong nucleus of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the ability to achieve the Bill's aim is far greater than would otherwise be the case.

The Deputy Prime Minister, John Anderson, said in November of last year that one of the real problems in many Aboriginal communities in New South Wales was the breakdown in elder respect.

That is very much evident in some of Queensland's ATSI communities. One only has to speak to community leaders across the cape to hear the frustration they feel. They have tried to run a community and enforce a sense of self-esteem, respect and values upon their younger people, but younger people do not necessarily respect the traditional role that elders play. We all know the traditional role that elders have had in ATSI communities in Queensland. We as parliamentarians should do what we can to legislate to underpin the strong role they have played.

I have had interesting representations from people in relation to this issue, as no doubt the Attorney-General and Minister Spence have. An elder in Bamaga said to me that the problem that his community has with its young people is that they do not see any deterrent whatsoever with the European justice system. The elders would like to think that it works effectively, but it does not work effectively. There are a few runaway juveniles who cause significant problems, and perhaps some adults. In the case of juveniles, what happens to them? They go before a magistrate and are sent to the Cleveland Detention Centre in Townsville. They do not fear what they are going to experience. In actual fact, it is an adventure for them.

Whilst in detention they are given three square meals a day and a television. They are given the chance to partake in interactive opportunities they may not otherwise have had and—this is what I have been told from elders in that community—they come back with a new set of Nikes. When they return to the community, they talk to their mates about it who think to themselves, "That can't have been an altogether bad experience." That situation indicates that what we have done to date is not working to address these issues in ATSI communities around Queensland. We as legislators should therefore think somewhat outside of the square. If we want to think outside of the square, we need to be careful to make sure that we get the chemistry right.

When I asked community councils and elders what sort of role they wanted in the justice system, I received an extremely interesting response. A number of them said that what they would like to do is take the offenders out the back and give them a good towelling over, thinking that that would fix them. I said to them that I was not so sure that we could go that far in Queensland. I think there might be significant problems in attempting to legislate along those lines. However, there are some elements of their justice system which we can quite responsibly incorporate within our system. This demonstrates that some of those communities and some of the individual directions they want to take go further than where we want to go.

We say that we will respect the cultural differences and cultural issues of these communities. When they say that they would like to give them a traditional towelling, we cannot do that because that does not fit within our modern Western standards. Therefore, many of these people think, "How much are they really listening to what we're saying?" However, that is impossible for us to do. I understand that the Northern Territory has given a far greater degree of latitude to its traditional communities to deal with problems in more summary ways. But that is not without issue. Some Aboriginal elders have said to me during the crime forums being conducted around Queensland that years ago they were taken out and speared in the leg. I replied, "That's a bit harsh, isn't it?" They said, "There is not a big problem with recidivism." However, that is still fairly dramatic compared to the way we have tried to evolve our justice system. The best we can hope for is to consider and respect aspects of their customary law and aspects of their customary considerations with regard to dealing with crime problems in the community and incorporate that in our justice system. This legislation seeks to do that.

I would have preferred trialling an extension of the involvement of community justice groups in providing sentencing recommendations to judges of the District Court and justices of the Supreme Court. The issue we are dealing with is an imperfect science at this stage. We really do not know how it is going to work. Certainly, it will work differently in different places around Queensland. As I said at the outset, the application of this system would be relatively easy when looking at cape communities, areas around Cairns which have significant indigenous communities, areas around Townsville and perhaps even Mackay and other areas around Queensland which have a strong and secure nucleus of ATSI communities. Once we start broadening these sorts of options to all areas of Queensland, it will not be without it problems.

An Aboriginal elder from Brisbane rang me about four months ago and urged me to oppose this legislation. He urged me to oppose this legislation on the basis that it would create division in the community. He was quite happy with the existing justice system in this State because there had been significant headway made. He said that one of the major issues as to why this legislation would be extremely difficult and unwise to support was because, in many areas of Queensland, particularly places such as Brisbane, there is a significant fragmentation of traditional Aboriginal communities. Who is to establish who should be on those justice groups? There are competing interests which are a part of many traditional Aboriginal clan situations. Who will decide who will be in and who will be out? In common with European Australians, there are differences of areas. There are certainly differences of areas within ATSI communities across Queensland and quite strong differences as to who is traditional to an area.

It is difficult to establish Aboriginal police liaison officers in some communities where there are two quite distinct Aboriginal communities. When setting up the selection committee, one side says, "We should have somebody on this selection committee." The other side says, "We should have someone on the selection committee." A person from either side becoming the ALO can create a very interesting situation. The process of appointing people to various positions needs to be very diplomatic and pragmatic. I suppose that is no different to the internal politics in non-ATSI communities throughout Queensland.

There is some concern about this issue in the community. I do not know if the Attorney-General has heard about it. Certainly, it is an issue that has been raised with me in Brisbane. When in Cairns I was asked how we could apply this situation where there is a far more secure and definable nucleus of ATSI communities. Issues were raised as to who would be a part of it and how it would ultimately work. However, I would have preferred to have seen a trial of the system to see how it would work in order to analyse it and find the best way to apply it across Queensland. When I visited the cape in January of this year I made a commitment that the Queensland coalition, if elected, would commit itself to trial this in perhaps three cape communities. I said that the system should be on a trial basis because that gives us the chance to more clearly modify it, and if it did not work we would not proceed with it.

The other thing I said when I visited that community was that I feel there is a very strong need for us to include some traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander notions of justice. They involve the notions of banishment, shame and humiliation. Some in those communities said that they have their own ways of doing that at the moment. I was talking with people in either Bamaga or Kowanyama about the issue of banishment. One lady said that years ago, in her mother or grandmother's generation, if somebody played up they were sent over to a cousin community at Palm Island. That was their form of banishment: people were excluded from their own community.

I concede that in this day and age those things become a little more difficult to achieve. In our notion of justice, European justice, some of those things seem a little harsh, but they worked within those communities, and those communities are very keen to look at how to incorporate the use of exclusion, shame and humiliation. Those particular options do not appear to be included in the legislation we are considering today.

I was very pleased that, after we announced our intention to look at something like this, the Government indicated that it was looking at a legislative framework for those principles. Whether that was under active consideration in the department I am not sure. I will be charitable to the Attorney-General and to the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy, who said that they had been looking at something like this. I would hope our comments have brought that issue to a more speedy conclusion in Parliament than it may otherwise have had if it had not been mentioned in January of this year. It is extremely important that we get the chemistry right.

We are in an era of reconciliation. When I was going across the cape it was acknowledged by people that the Bjelke-Petersen Government had the first indigenous member of Parliament in Eric Deeral, who was elected in 1974 and defeated in 1977. I say to honourable members that an indigenous person becoming a member of Parliament today would be heralded as one of the greatest steps forward in reconciliation, but the election of an indigenous person happened in Queensland almost 30 years ago. I think that just goes to show how perceptions change and how the level of hype attached to certain things changes. Some things that once seemed to be accepted as relatively insignificant are very much the focus of today.

I think it is extremely important for us to foster a situation of the major political parties doing whatever they can to encourage far more ATSI participation in our political process. There is always a difference between talking and actually delivering real participation in our democratic process. I am not one who advocates quotas. I will never advocate quotas on the basis of gender, race or any other sort of representation in Parliament. I think that gives us a mock democracy. I think at the end of the day we have to address the underlying concerns and the reasons people might not necessarily want to participate. That involves our political process being inclusive. I think it is very significant that there has only ever been one ATSI member of this Chamber, elected in 1974 and voted out in 1977. I think that was the ultimate in reconciliation. Can members imagine what sort of fanfare would accompany that event today?

As we look at these issues it is important that we ensure that serious offenders do not escape jail, which will remain one of the sentencing options of judges. I would like the Attorney-General to expand on this in his speech in reply to the second-reading debate. When I announced these measures in the cape earlier this year I said that they should not be implemented in the case of people who commit serious offences—those who commit the types of offences that would go before our District and Supreme Courts—which would prevent them from going to jail, at least as a part of their sentence. I am very keen to hear what the Attorney-General envisages in that regard. Does he envisage that the community justice group will have the capacity to recommend that there be no jail sentence when there would otherwise be some time served in jail?

What I envisaged with my proposal was that if a person warrants incarceration they would be incarcerated, but maybe for some lesser time, and then be put under the authority of a justice group and have the remainder of the sentence dealt with in their community. That might involve a person being taken to an out-station or being dealt with in another way desired by the community.

There was a very strong view amongst ATSI community councils, which basically hold communities together—they are the nucleus of and the driving force behind those communities—that the out-station idea is an extremely important one. They supported the establishment of well-resourced out-stations where juveniles or adults can be taken and looked after in a customary way. The offenders would be taken away from negative influences—whether they be alcohol, their peers or whatever—and would have a chance under the guidance of the community leaders to rebuild their self-esteem and to be taught skills.

The results of these sorts of programs are not immediate. It will take a long time for them to be seen. The sorts of things that will solve the problems in the cape and in many of our other ATSI communities are long-term options. The problems have become ingrained over generations and it will probably take generations to redress the issues—welfare dependency, crime or whatever the case may be. It is going to take a long time and there is no perfect solution.

It will be difficult in the short term to assess the success or otherwise of the programs put in place as a consequence of the legislation we are debating today. How will we assess their success in five years' time? Will it be a matter of simply looking at statistics relating to the number and proportion of ATSI people in Queensland prisons in Queensland? Will it be a matter of looking at the number and type of reported offences in five years' time, comparing them with current statistics and trying to determine whether there has been a decline or an increase in the number of offences in those communities?

Certainly there are a significant number of offences committed in those communities. One only has to look at the issue of domestic violence to see that. I am sure you are very aware of that, Madam Deputy Speaker. Last year the Courier-Mail carried an article which indicated that there could be up to $60m in outstanding criminal compensation claims from the cape. That is extremely significant.

The problems of alcoholism and welfare dependency and the social breakdown they cause in those communities become self-perpetuating. We see it in non-ATSI communities around Queensland, but we see it to a far greater extent in ATSI communities because of the circumstances in those communities. All of those things combine to lead to a disproportionate representation in the criminal justice system.

To ensure the success of this program I think the Attorney-General needs to provide an assurance to the people of Queensland that those who commit serious offences and who will be considered under this legislation will not escape some time in jail if jail is warranted. I will tell the House why. There is a perception and a concern that the justice system does treat ATSI and non-ATSI offenders differently. I think that is an unfair perception in most cases; however, if we have something in the law that entrenches distinctly different justice systems beyond the consideration of cultural issues and customary law issues, then I think we run the risk of seeing dissent and division emerge in our community. That is something that we need to be very careful about.

Mr Foley: I am very happy to give a public assurance of equality before the law.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Thank you very much, Mr Attorney-General. I think it is important. If one looks at the polls and some of the issues that have been raised in this State and this nation in the last few years, one becomes aware of the concerns that I have been raising today.

I would like to return to the question of what the Minister envisages could be allowed in the form of customary law at some future time. That is an important point to the ATSI community in Queensland. Many people would be happy to hear what the Minister has to say about that issue.

The issue of addressing concerns in ATSI communities is not new. It is something that has been around for a long time. I believe we should be looking at other issues such as winding in restorative justice concepts. I do not believe that restorative justice per se is spelt out here. The Attorney-General may envisage that restorative justice is a part of the alternative sentencing options which he might like to put forward, but I believe that this is an extremely important matter.

Most people are prepared to give non-violent offenders a second go because they believe that people can run off the rails. Residents are concerned when they see people committing the same type of offence over and over again. The common view is that if an offender keeps offending, the processes which are put in place to address offending behaviour are not working.

Whilst there have been some steps taken towards the incorporation of restorative justice in our system over the last few years in this State, I believe it is something we should take a degree further. I understand this system is now working in about four communities in Queensland with regard to juvenile justice. Restorative justice is the clear option rather than a young person entering the criminal justice

system. I believe that not only could we have restorative justice outside the traditional criminal justice system but we could also have those concepts incorporated as part of our traditional criminal justice system.

I know that this matter has been considered. Some steps are taken towards it. It is a case of three steps forward and four steps back, and four steps forward and five steps back. We need to make offenders far more aware of the impact that their crimes have on individuals and the broader community. People say to me that if one does not have a conscience, one cannot possibly be rehabilitated. Without a conscience, an offender would have no understanding of the impact of his offences upon individuals and the community at large.

I think it is most important that we bring offenders together with people who have been offended against, if the people who have been offended against are prepared to do that. In that way, offenders will have the capacity to sit down and listen and appreciate the impact of the crime they have committed. I believe the restorative justice concept is something which could be extremely important in our criminal justice system. It has already been proposed in the Penalties and Sentences and Other Acts Amendment Bill. It will provide a greater degree of involvement for ATSI communities in Queensland.

If a person is aware of the impact of his crime, if he has a conscience, and if he is prepared to do something about it, I believe that will be the best way for us to avoid having repeat crimes. I am sure a lot of people go through our criminal justice system who, apart from the victim impact statement and the testimony of the victim in court, are unaware of the impact of their crimes.

For them, the court process is over and that is it. They do not understand that the victim is going to have nightmares for years. The victims are the people who are ultimately sentenced.

Mr Purcell: It's their lifetime.

Mr SPRINGBORG: That is right, it is their life. I am sure the honourable member for Bulimba has seen people in this situation. These are the people with recurring nightmares. In many cases, there is an impact on the victim's family to the extent that it can lead to family break-up. One would think that sometimes these crimes would bring victims and their families together. However, sometimes the pressures are so great that families are broken apart. Victims also lose their jobs because they cannot handle the pressure. These are the people who suffer nervous shock as a consequence of the crime.

I do not believe this matter is considered seriously enough in our community. Victims of crime have told me that they are the ones who wear the scars. The offender goes to jail where he may be rehabilitated. In jail he is given TAFE options and he is hopefully retrained. The victims lose their jobs and there is no retraining for them. The system does not help the victim.

I concede that in 1995 the Attorney-General introduced legislation which seeks to incorporate the concerns of victims of crime before the courts. I believe that was a step in the right direction. It was a very important step in this direction, but we have a long way to go. Traditionally, our justice system has never considered the rights or the concerns of victims because victims have only ever been an exhibit until recent times. I am sure the Attorney-General appreciates that. That is the basis of our system of justice. In a sense, crimes were an offence against the State rather than an offence against the victim. The victim walked into the court, became an exhibit, and was out of there with his concerns still intact.

At least we now have the provision for victim impact statements. Victims now have a feeling that they are part of the system. We can build on the concept of restorative justice to the extent that offenders may have to apologise as a condition of their parole. It may be that we can reach the stage at which offenders will sit down with the victim and negotiate some sort of restorative measure. It might mean that the offender will say, "Okay. I will come around and cut your grass once a week", or something like that. I would like to hear from the Attorney-General whether he would envisage introducing such a concept at some future time.

I would like to conclude by referring to the number of reports which have been prepared to date. I commend the Government for introducing this legislation into the Parliament. I would have preferred to have seen a trial of the provisions of this legislation because I am not completely convinced that it will work. A trial period would have enabled us to introduce some modifications to the legislation.

One thing that became very apparent to me at Cape York was that many people are frustrated. There have been a lot of task forces and a lot of committees. We have had a lot of people looking at a lot of issues. A lot of reports have been deposited in drawers, filing cabinets and in-trays all around Queensland and have not been acted upon. I put this issue to a couple of ATSI people. I asked them where we should be going in respect of some of the traditional forms of punishment. I asked them whether we should have a forum on that matter. I was told, "We have talked about those issues. We have discussed them over and over again." Their attitude is, "Here we go again. Are we going to have another talkfest? Where is it going to lead?"

The Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy is present in the Chamber. There are a lot of things that the Government needs to pick up on. The report of Boni Robertson and the indigenous women's task force looked at certain issues. I believe that was a good initiative. The report was tabled in Parliament in November last year. There is a lot of frustration and a lot of concern on the cape. I share that concern. We will probably go 12 months down the track before anything is done.

Ms Spence: The legislation we are debating today is a response to one of the recommendations of the task force.

Mr SPRINGBORG: That is one element of the legislation. The involvement of elders is one element of the task force report. Certainly that report was presented in November of last year. I am still not completely satisfied in my own mind that it is a direct response to it. If it is a direct response, that is good. Keeping in mind that I think it was in January that I was talking about the issue as well, if that is the case, I think it would have been one of the most speedy responses ever to come out of Government, even though it might be dealing with one particular aspect.

Ms Spence: A very hard-working Attorney-General.

Mr SPRINGBORG: There is a Coroner's Act that needs reviewing. I would like to say that maybe we should be lighting a fire under the Attorney-General with regard to the Coroner's Act as well. He was reviewing that Act in 1998, 1999 and again in the year 2000. Basically, there is a Bill sitting in Parliament over—

Mr Schwarten interjected.

Mr SPRINGBORG: There is a lot he has not done. There is a draft Bill on the Coroner's Act that has been sitting there for two years and also a set of costings, so I am just saying that if he is going to proclaim himself as Speedy Gonzales, there are a few other important areas of law reform that I would like to see the Attorney-General rocket into as well. But I am yet to be convinced that there was really a response to that. It might have been a response to my own calls and a little bit of catch-up. Maybe we should give him the benefit of the doubt.

There are other aspects of Boni Robertson's report that included the notions of customary law—banishment, shame and humiliation—but as I understand it they are not included in this legislation. There were certain other issues that she addressed in the domestic violence area. She also addressed the closure of canteens and working with communities to find alternative ways of being able to raise revenue. I think that it is extremely important that those other aspects come forward.

There is a lot of frustration out in the community. I note that Tony Koch in a number of pages of the Courier-Mail hailed this wonderful report of Boni Robertson when it was handed down. It was fantastic, there is no doubt about it. Probably some of those issues have been talked about before, but certainly he has not been as proactive in prodding the Government to come forward with its response to the report. That response was promised in April. There was certainly a mealy-mouthed draft response which was leaked.

Mr Schwarten: There are five women's shelters going up in Aboriginal communities as a result of that report.

Mr SPRINGBORG: If the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing is rocketing forward on these issues and is so far advanced, why hasn't he presented the Government's response to it so that we are able to have a look at it? That is what I am saying.

Ms Spence: We have.

Mr SPRINGBORG: The Government has not.

Ms Spence: You completely miss the point every time. We have done the first response. We are preparing the second response. It will be released in December. Boni Robertson and the task force are well aware of that and they are pleased with the Government's progress. They are not talking to you because they are happy with the Government's progress.

Mr SPRINGBORG: What I am saying is that a consolidated response to that task force report has not been forthcoming. There has been nothing forthcoming that is indicating that there is any incremental plan from the Government for the delivery of those services.

Mr Schwarten: That's not right.

Mr SPRINGBORG: There is not. There is not something that is publicly available. There is not something out there that the community is able to access and on which it is able to say, "This is where it started off. This is how the Government is going to respond to each one of those issues in a staged way." There is nothing like that.

Ms Spence: There is a first response. The second response will be out in December— and it won't be the last response. These things are not resolved by one response. The next response will come out in December, and there will be more.

Mr SPRINGBORG: What I am saying to the Minister is that even the things that we are seeing, if they have come out of that, are still ad hoc. I still think there are ways that the Government can lay out a very clear determination of the things that are planned to be done now and, if it wants to do things in the future, it should say that they are issues for active consideration. There are a lot of things on which I would like to be able to say to the Minister that, yes, we can provide bipartisan support so they can be expedited. That is what I would like to be able to say to the Minister, but I am concerned when I hear things such as that the response that was due in April is to be produced later on in the year. That sort of thing leads me to believe that there are things that are causing the process to be held up.

I am sure that we could assist the Government in expediting many of these issues through this Parliament. After the Minister last year made a statement somewhere—I did not see it myself—the media or the Minister's office asked me, "The Government is going to develop a 2010 sort of proposal for ATSI policy in Queensland. Will you be prepared to provide bipartisan support?" I said, "That would be very good, but I would like to know what is in it. Certainly I would like to know that we are not reinventing the wheel." That is what I am saying. If we are to have all this talk of bipartisanship, then let the Opposition be included in the process. Let us not have these concerns that are raised from time to time about a report which gives a lot of hope and a lot of ideas but which the Government does not seem to be able to provide a concise way of responding to. That is a concern.

Ms Spence: The problem is that you are not the shadow Minister for Aboriginal and Islander Affairs; Mr Lester is. I have sent a letter to him inviting him to get a briefing on any issue at any time. So if you are not feeling that you are involved, that is because you are not making the approaches to get briefings on anything.

Mr SPRINGBORG: That is true; the honourable member for Keppel is the shadow Minister.

Ms Spence: You are as welcome as he is to have briefings on any of these ideas.

Mr SPRINGBORG: I have some significant interest in the area of Aboriginal justice. That is how my interest started off in here. We know that a lot of these matters are interwoven. But the real issue here is that briefing the shadow Minister or briefing somebody else is not going to necessarily determine the public response that a lot of people want. That is the point that the Minister is missing. Providing a briefing when the shadow Minister sits down with departmental officers and talks about various issues is not the public response and the commitment that people want on issues. That is what I am talking about. I think it is a point that the Minister needs to appreciate and understand.

Let us look at the issue of canteens. The Boni Robertson committee made the point about the canteens. I would be very much interested to hear where we are going to go with those. Historically there was a reason for the establishment of those canteens. I suppose those canteens provided some degree of regulation over the sale of alcohol into those communities. We know all about the sly-grogging issue. They raise a significant amount of the revenue that is required for those communities across the cape. But the real irony about them, of course, is that whilst they provide up to a million dollars, I think in the case of Kowanyama and $400,000 in the case of Bamaga, their social cost is actually far greater than the revenue that they return to the council. The council actually then takes that revenue, as the Attorney-General is aware, to deliver the services within the community. I know that in Kowanyama the council uses some of the revenue to provide services for children who may not be otherwise getting the nutritional meals that they require.

So really at the end of the day it is a matter of whether the $400,000 raised in a community has a disproportionate social cost—a cost more than $400,000. That is something that communities themselves say. I have had some people say to me "We would love to close our canteen if we could have an alternative business venture. Maybe the Government could help seed that." Others have actually looked at establishing their own alternative business options and certainly some councils up there have declared themselves dry communities. I think that that is one of the most significant things that we can do. I would hope that if the Minister is so keen to provide these expeditious responses to the task force report, we will see in its next response something about the Government's approach to the canteen issue.

By and large, in absolute conclusion, the Opposition does support the legislation but the Opposition will be very much monitoring it. The Opposition views this as trial legislation. I think that, at the end of the day, extending this legislation is taking us into a new criminal justice area and its effectiveness will have to be reviewed at some point of time. Obviously, if it has not worked, if we gain Government we will not be able to continue on with it. The Government is probably in the same position; if there are too many issues that cause difficulty it will not continue with it, either. However, if it has worked to a large extent and requires modification, then we would do that.