



Speech by

**WARREN PITT**

**MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE**

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Hansard 3 October 2000

### **PROSTITUTION LEGISLATION**

**Mr PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (6.26 p.m.): The issue of regulated prostitution is not merely a moral and social issue, it is also a health issue for the worker, the clients and the general community. It is also an issue of safety for those involved in the industry.

Unlike those opposite, the Beattie Government has faced up to its responsibilities with respect to prostitution. Successive coalition Governments in this State took the ostrich approach to an important issue, choosing merely to deny the existence of brothels and hope that somehow prostitution would fade away. This attitude resulted in corruption flourishing in the industry and it eventually led to the Fitzgerald inquiry. I have religious convictions against and moral reservations about prostitution, but I am realistic enough to know that it will never go away. The best we can do as a civilised and compassionate society is develop public policy which addresses key issues of individual and societal health and safety. A regulated industry has the best chance of having some success in this regard.

I wish to take this opportunity to outline to the House how Queensland's prostitution laws are working and proving effective in the fight to stamp out illegal brothels and streetwalking. The Prostitution Enforcement Task Force was established under this Government's Prostitution Act and came into effect on 1 July this year. Since then the task force has begun a number of investigations in relation to illegal prostitution and has been instrumental in closing down a number of illegal brothels. Currently, the task force has 16 investigations in progress, including investigations into 12 suspected illegal brothels in south-east Queensland, north Queensland and far-north Queensland. Charges under the Criminal Code were laid against four people after a raid on a suspected illegal adult entertainment venue in Brisbane. The task force also has closed two operations suspected of illegal prostitution in Brisbane, finalised proceedings against two illegal brothels in residential areas in Kingston and Clontarf under the Prostitution Act and begun prosecutions under the Criminal Code against five people in relation to an illegal brothel in Cairns.

Enforcing Queensland's laws against street prostitution is a matter for the eight individual police regions. Each of those regions takes the enforcement of Queensland's prostitution laws very seriously. The Metropolitan North region reports that its prostitution unit has made 447 arrests for prostitution related offences since July 1999, representing 74% of the total number of arrests for prostitution related offences Statewide. The unit has closed two illegal brothels in the region, resulting in 18 charges being preferred. It is investigating the operations of a further three suspected brothels in the region, along with targeting street prostitution.

From 31 August to 2 September 2000 the prostitution unit conducted Operation Ambush, which targeted street prostitution in the Fortitude Valley division resulting in 37 charges of soliciting and three drug charges. Since February this year, as a direct result of the unit's work, 230 people have been charged with public soliciting and 13 people have been arrested for brothel related offences.

The unit liaises closely with the Prostitution Enforcement Task Force. In January this year an illegal brothel was closed down in the Metropolitan South region. The Prostitution Enforcement Task Force is investigating another four suspected illegal brothels in the region. In the North Coast region, 10 people recently were charged with prostitution related offences on the Sunshine Coast, and one suspected illegal brothel is under investigation. In the Northern region this year, Townsville police, assisted by State Crime Operations Command personnel, completed two major operations targeting

illegal prostitution. Fourteen arrests were made as a result of those investigations. Within the South Eastern region, 37 prostitution related offences were detected and prosecuted between January and 19 September this year. Ongoing efforts are being made in respect of identifying illegal brothels and prostitution related offences, including two operations conducted on the Gold Coast this year. Within the Southern region, two people have been arrested this year in Toowoomba for participating in the provision of prostitution.

It is obvious that Queensland's prostitution laws are working and that our Police Service takes enforcement very seriously. This Government's Prostitution Act was not just concerned with addressing corruption and health concerns by allowing for licensed brothels; it had as another major objective the stamping out of illegal prostitution. Rigorous efforts are being made throughout Queensland to ensure that that occurs. I support the Minister and the member for Lytton, and I commend the Minister for his courage in refusing to sweep this issue under the carpet.

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