



Speech by

## Miss FIONA SIMPSON

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

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Hansard 20 June 2001

### PROSTITUTION AMENDMENT BILL

**Miss SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—NPA) (9.59 p.m.): I have been listening to a fairytale, according to the viewpoints of members opposite. Suddenly one would think that they have stamped out illegal prostitution, that suddenly street walkers have gone, that suddenly single operators are not operating in suburban houses next door to mums and dads in the suburbs and suddenly that the rights of women have been elevated and protected and everything is rosy. The previous speaker in the debate said that the government was going to address some of the causes behind prostitution, and one would assume that that would involve talking about the economic issues of those women who go into prostitution. I want to mention this issue before I deal with the rest of the bill, because this is at the heart of the hypocrisy of this government.

This industry is not advancing the cause of women. This industry is not advancing and elevating the status of women. When I raised this issue during the last budget estimates committee, I asked the women's policy minister what programs are being implemented to help women get out of prostitution, realising that the majority of women in the profession have come from abusive and lower socioeconomic backgrounds. I asked what programs the government was putting in place to help women get out of this industry and to divert people from this industry. That minister could not answer that question. If there are programs in place, they are not so well known to that particular minister. That goes to the heart of the hypocrisy when this government now talks about how it has cleaned things up and everything is nice and rosy because it brought in legalised brothels and a government sanctioned system.

There has already been criticism of just such a system, because Victoria, a state in which prostitution has been legally sanctioned, has an additional layer of prostitution. That is the situation with Queensland as well. A government sanctioned system does not wipe out the other layers of prostitution; rather, it adds an additional layer of prostitution. This government has done nothing to address the root causes as to why women from low socioeconomic backgrounds, many from abusive backgrounds, have found themselves in this lifestyle, which is exploitative primarily of women but even men get caught in this lifestyle as well.

I support the Leader of the Opposition's legislation, which seeks to give power back to local governments. I find it extraordinary that this government—which talks about democracy, which talks about giving communities a say, which talks about the rights of people in local communities to charter their own course—seeks not to give that power back to local governments. We are saying that there are communities other than those with a population of fewer than 25,000 people that have the right to have a say about whether they want a government sanctioned brothel in a particular area in their community. Would shouldn't they have that right?

A lot has been said by members opposite that people should not have the right to speak from a moral point of view. This is another example of the arrogance of this government. I have heard members on the other side of the chamber sniggering at other members who have spoken from a moral point of view, as well as the other issues behind their reasoning for supporting this legislation. It is arrogance in the extreme that those opposite seek to censor people who do in fact hold values, who wish to speak upon those values and who are active in their communities based upon those values. Those opposite want to censor people in local government who are active in those communities who may wish to express what sort of community they want to live in. They are giving those communities with more than 25,000 people no right, and that is the ultimate in arrogance.

I have talked about the fact that those opposite want to censor people if they want to speak from a moral point of view. Why should they not have the right to do that? What is so wrong with that? They have criticised those people by saying that they are taking the high moral ground. I would suggest that people who take that line of argument are taking the lowest moral ground. There are other issues behind my concerns over adding additional layers of prostitution in a community other than just taking away the rights of local governments to speak against it. However, there are other reasons as well. Members on the other side of the House said that health is a concern and that government sanctioned brothels would increase the health prospects of prostitutes. It might come as a bit of a surprise to some members, but a prostitute is only as clean as their last client. The reality is that they may be getting tested every week—but it is probably not that often—but they are only as clean as their last client. That is the reality. If those opposite want to claim that government sanctioned brothels are all about health, some basics as to what really happens should be brought to their attention.

Another part of the fairytale mentioned by those opposite that somehow people look forward to going into this industry and that it is a genuine avenue for them to pursue because it is now sanctioned by government is a real concern. It is mainly young women who are involved in this occupation. There are not many older women to be found in this occupation, and I do not think that is going to be a surprise to people. Rather, it attracts young women who are at a particularly vulnerable stage in their lives. The women I have talked to who have found themselves caught in this lifestyle have said that they do not want to see young women enticed into this lifestyle because it is now perceived to be an acceptable lifestyle because it is sanctioned by government. Their viewpoints need to be heard as well, but maybe those people on the other side will criticise them and say that those people do not have a right to say that because they are speaking from a moral point of view. However, those women have experience because they have been there and found it to be a lifestyle that destroyed their lives; it is not one that they would want to see their daughters employed in.

This legislation will give the power back to local governments. I oppose the legislation previously brought in by the Beattie government which contained a curious provision which created two classes of society in Queensland—those communities under the 25,000 population cap and those above. We have heard how the Local Government Association has spoken out. It wants to see local governments have that power of veto, and why not? It is time they had that power of veto and that communities have the right to chart their future. If there is one area which leads people to become disillusioned with government these days, it is the fact that they do not get the right to have a say. They feel that more and more the decision making has been taken away from their communities. Why shouldn't they have a right to have a say? I support this legislation.

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