



Speech by

JOHN ENGLISH

MEMBER FOR REDLANDS

Hansard 20 June 2001

PROSTITUTION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr ENGLISH (Redlands—ALP) (10.21 p.m.): I rise to oppose the Prostitution Amendment Bill 2001, which was introduced into the Legislative Assembly by Mr Horan, the member for Toowoomba South, on 16 May 2001. The purpose of this bill is contrary to the purpose of the Prostitution Act 1999. The purpose of that act was to regulate and control prostitution and related activities in Queensland. The Prostitution Act restricts the size of brothels and their locality. Development applications are approved through local councils, and to assist them in this role and to ensure the continued existing quality of life in local communities, the regulation provides a code for IDAS, the Integrated Development Assessment System. The bill introduced by the member for Toowoomba South would, if passed, negatively impact on the principles of the act, in particular the principles of ensuring a healthy society and promoting safety.

A principle that guided development of the legislative framework for prostitution was ensuring a healthy society. There are perceived health risks associated with the sex industry, particularly in relation to sexually transmitted infections. One of the strategies of this act is to ensure that the health status of prostitutes is regularly monitored and that health risks to prostitutes, their clients and the community are minimised and that there be an onus upon brothel licensees or approved managers to ensure such examinations or tests are undertaken. Community members have the comfort of knowing that brothel licensees and prostitutes working for licensed brothels are conducting themselves in a responsible manner in maintaining the community health from their perspective. The regulation contributes to this strategy by prescribing the interval times for medical examinations or tests to ascertain whether a prostitute is infected.

Promoting safety is also an underlying principle of prostitution legislation reform. While the personal safety risks associated with prostitution are difficult to quantify, it is clearly an occupation in which people are at risk of physical violence. Any honourable members who have read a magazine put out by SQWISI called *Ugly Mugs* would realise that a litany of violence is committed against prostitutes currently working in the sex industry. They are human beings. They deserve the protection of the law. They are not animals. Prostitutes have the same fundamental rights to personal safety as does the rest of the community, and any legislative regime should contain safeguards to ensure that their safety is not compromised. A properly regulated industry with prostitutes working in licensed brothels should minimise the risk of personal harm to prostitutes and offer them a level of protection against the range of safety risks associated with prostitution, including physical assault.

The act and regulation contribute to this policy objective by prescribing the requirements that brothel licensees install safety devices. For example, a licensee of a brothel must ensure that each room in the brothel used to provide prostitution services has a concealed alarm button or equivalent communication device that is in working order. Also, the act prohibits a brothel licensee from taking punitive action against a prostitute for refusing services where the prostitute believes the situation may become violent or unsafe.

The passage of this bill through the House will undermine these principles and, as such, the bill must be opposed. This bill is another example of what the National Party is all about: off-loading responsibility. The National Party's poor performance in the 17 February election was not a reflection on the National Party, its policies or its satanic preference deal with One Nation. No, the blame for the National Party's poor performance lies at the feet of the former member for Surfers Paradise, Mr Borbidge. The National Party refused to look inwards and critically review itself. The responsibility always

lies with someone else. In this instance, members of the National Party are attempting to off-load their responsibilities as members of the state parliament onto local governments.

State parliament exists to govern this lovely state of Queensland. The honourable member for Toowoomba South wants to off-load responsibility for governing Queensland to local government authorities. Most if not all local government authorities currently have brothels within their areas of responsibility. To think that any lack of local planning approval will stop brothels is the National Party reverting to its Joh era behaviour of sticking its head in the sand and claiming that if it is not legal then no brothels exist. This level of denial by members of the National Party causes me great concern. I recommend they make an appointment with the honourable member for Cairns and take their first tentative steps towards reality.

This bill is not about empowering local government. This bill is designed to continue to marginalise the sex industry. It is designed to reinforce the deluded concept that if local government fails to approve a brothel then no brothels exist. The claim by the honourable member for Toowoomba South that there is no community demand for brothels will come as a shock to the multitude of people currently making money from brothels that are frequented by thousands of Queenslanders. To continue to marginalise the sex industry will only result in decreased safety for the sex workers. I for one have greater concern for my fellow man and condemn this bill to the House.
