



Speech by

KERRY SHINE

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH

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PROSTITUTION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr SHINE (Toowoomba North—ALP) (10.07 p.m.): I was quite amazed by the comment of the honourable member for Caloundra that the Planning and Environment Court is a court of the people. In order to get to that court, one has to be all but a millionaire. It is anything but a court of the people. The alternative, however, offered under this act is a service that is cheap and very quick.

On 20 June this year, I had the occasion to speak on the subject of prostitution during the debate on the opposition's bill to amend the Prostitution Act with respect to the aspect of the act relating to cities or towns with more or less than 25,000 people. At the conclusion of my remarks on that occasion, I stated very clearly on the record my views on prostitution. As a result of publicity associated with this bill, I have received some correspondence and telephone calls and I have had some personal contact with a number of Toowoomba residents concerning my position on the subject matter of prostitution generally and the amendments within this bill in particular. My views on prostitution remain the same. To explain them, I can do no better than to quote and firmly endorse the views of the honourable member for Bulimba, Mr Purcell, who spoke in the debate on the original 1999 act. He said, in part—

I do not need to tell any honourable member that the issue we are debating today generates strong emotions. I hold very strong views about prostitution and I have expressed those views in the process that has resulted in the Bill we are considering today. In common with many people, I would like to live in a perfect world where prostitutes do not exist, just as I would like to live in a world where there were no wars, poverty or hunger and Coalition Governments were honest. My views are a result of my upbringing and experience. I happen to believe that nobody should have to work as a prostitute. But they do and they will continue to do so. I happen to believe that nobody should use the services of prostitutes, but they do and they will continue to do so.

In bringing these amendments into the House, the government seeks to improve the operation of the legislation with a view to ensuring that its intention so far as it relates to prostitution is achieved, and the government's intention both with respect to the 1999 act and tonight's bill is to promote community health protection, reduce violence and prevent corruption. That is what this is all about. This has to be borne in mind, particularly when people—often very sincere people—object and claim that councils are being gagged and that criminals will be able to run brothels. They have to remember that this is about health protection, the reduction of violence and the prevention of corruption. As the minister said in his second reading speech, the objective of the bill is to continue the progress that has been made to date by improving the planning approval process for brothels and clarifying some of the concepts and procedures that underpin the achievement of the act's objective.

When he was in Toowoomba two weeks ago, the Premier was questioned on this topic. I have a transcript of his press interview and I will quote some portions of it, because it echoes my views on this subject. He stated—

Under days gone by what used to happen was they used to sweep this under the carpet and pretend it didn't exist. You don't get that with my government, it's out in the glare of sunshine, everybody sees what we're doing. We have the toughest prostitution laws in Australia. We get enormous criticism because we are out there having strict laws, the toughest, we're not going to change that. There will be no Kings Crosses here, there'll be no St Kilda roads either. We have the toughest in Australia, evidenced by the fact that there's only one been approved. Now the bottom line with all this is we are determined to protect the health of our community. I don't like prostitution, I hate it. I believe in families. I don't want to see anybody use the services of a prostitute and I wish people wouldn't but they do. It's a sad reflection on the human species and I wish they didn't but until they stop doing it then at the end of the day I've got to protect the health and wellbeing of the community. I will not play ostrich on this and they are welcome to protest, we have listened to them, they are simply opposed to the idea. Well, I'm not prepared to see people die of AIDS, it's that simple.

... let's be really clear about this: there is a fundamental principle called democracy. And I'll remind the councillor involved democracy reigns supreme. I went to the people on this platform in '98. I went to the people on this platform in 2001. The people in my view, have expressed a clear support for this policy twice. Now, I just urge them to respect democracy, respect the will of the people. Now, the will of the people has spoken twice on this. I have been open and transparent. Everybody knows my view on it, I've never run away from it, I've never hidden it like the cowards of the past that produced the corruption of the past. Everybody knows exactly where we stand. Now, I don't like prostitution, I hate it but at the end of the day I have to protect the wellbeing of the community and I don't want to see one person die of AIDS as a result of trying to cover up and paper over prostitution. You got to remember prostitution has been legal for many, many years before my government came along, supported by both sides of politics. Now, I'm bringing it out in the open in a way where it's transparent where everybody can see it. Now, they're welcome to protest but I am not going to turn the clock back to the corruption of the past and the disease of the past. Now, those who are arguing against our laws, let's be really clear about this, are supporting a system which will lead to corruption and disease. And I will have no bar of that.

I respectfully agree with the Premier and fully adopt his reasoning and position in relation to prostitution. At the end of the day, I realise that certain people, sincere in their beliefs, will disagree with the Premier and the government. In this democratic state, they have that precious right to disagree, to lobby and protest. As the parliamentary representative of some of them, I see it as my duty to convey their point of view to the government and to assist them in having access to the minister and the Premier. At the end of the day, whilst I share their objection to the practice of prostitution, as does the Premier and the minister, it just has to be accepted that we disagree on the methods of dealing with the problem. Either we ignore it and put up with the consequences and remember that prostitution led to the Fitzgerald inquiry, the jailing of the Police Commissioner and ultimately to the jailing even of cabinet ministers, or alternatively we make an earnest effort to tackle the problem by regulation and control to prevent those three things—corruption, violence and ill health.
