



Speech by

PETER LAWLOR

MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT

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LIQUOR AMENDMENT BILL

Mr LAWLOR (Southport—ALP) (3.05 p.m.): Even though this debate is starting to sound like a mutual admiration society, I, too, congratulate the minister and her ministerial and departmental staff on the effort they have put into this review.

Mr Cummins: The Gold Coast club.

Mr LAWLOR: A mighty fine club it is, too. The Liquor Amendment Bill incorporates two streams of amendments, that is, those arising from a review of the act under the principles of the national competition policy—NCP—and a number of administrative and miscellaneous issues necessary for the smooth operation of the legislation. I will deal firstly with matters raised in the national competition policy amendments, and the first relates to takeaway liquor. Perhaps the most significant outcome of the NCP review of the act was the decision to maintain the status quo in the sale of takeaway liquor. The sale of takeaway liquor to the general public will continue to be within the province of hoteliers and some special facility licence holders. The amendments will specifically preclude the sale of liquor from supermarkets and convenience stores. As the member for Mansfield and the member for Surfers Paradise said, the community is well catered for in this area by the hotels.

The amendments will abolish premiums for general and special facility licences. Currently, applicants for these licences must pay to the department a purchase price for the licence which allows bar trading and takeaway liquor sales. The amount of the premium depends on the size of the development and the facilities provided and may range from \$5,000 to \$200,000. The NCP review panel considered that premiums were an unnecessary barrier for entry to the market. They had been introduced initially to fund programs dealing with alcohol misuse and to finance a hotel rationalisation scheme. Funding to state agencies for alcohol misuse programs is now made directly through the normal budgetary processes rather than via a trust fund. The amendments will mean premiums, already halved since the announcement of the government policy in March 2000, will cease to be levied altogether 12 months after the commencement of this bill.

Other important amendments relate to public interest criteria for licences—an issue also raised by the member for Surfers Paradise. All applicants for a new licence or permanent extension to trading hours must first demonstrate a public need for the licence or extended hours. This requirement is primarily in place to assess the overall impact of the licence and prevent a proliferation of licences with the subsequent increase of availability issues. It supports the aim of the national health policy on alcohol. The NCP review recommended the benefits of retaining the concept and strengthening it, given that the abolition of premiums may see an increased number of applications for general hotel licences. The provisions have been strengthened and are to be focused on public interest rather than need. This subtle change will allow a higher degree of social impact assessment of applications and the ability to consider the effect of the potential licence or trading hours on various subcommunities within the locality such as schools or when it is to be located in a low socioeconomic area.

A matter addressed in the bill relating to administrative issues, which allows for a smoother operation of the legislation, relates to bottle shop relocations and transfers. The bill will streamline the current administrative processes in relation to, firstly, the relocation of a bottle shop within the same shopping precinct and, secondly, the sale of a bottle shop by one licensee to another licensee. Currently, licensees must apply for a new bottle shop licence in each of these cases. That means demonstrating public need and advertising to call for objections from members of the public. The new

process recognises that these are existing businesses that have already been subject to these requirements. The new process will simply result in an approval to a change of licensed area after the chief executive has considered all the relevant issues, including the maximum distance a shop may be from the main premises.

There are many other issues addressed by this bill, many of which have been referred to by previous speakers. I do not intend to go through them again. I support all of the various amendments, and I commend this bill to the House.
