



Speech by

**VAUGHAN JOHNSON**

**MEMBER FOR GREGORY**

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Hansard 20 June 2001

**PROSTITUTION AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mr JOHNSON** (Gregory—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (8.41 p.m.): I rise this evening to support the Prostitution Amendment Bill introduced by the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Toowoomba South. I will just pick up a couple of points that the member for Mount Isa touched on this evening. One such point was that prostitution is not an issue in this state. I disagree with the honourable member and Minister for Police because it is an issue. As he rightly said, it is one of the oldest professions in the world and, unfortunately, it is the scourge of many of our societies. I agree with him that it has to be managed, and it has to be managed in a manner that is worth while to the communities.

In introducing this amending bill, the Leader of the Opposition is about not only listening to the views of the leaders of Toowoomba, but many members in this parliament—and I see the Honourable Minister for Local Government on the other side of the chamber; no doubt she will speak tonight, and I see some of the other members here this evening—represent cities of greater than 25,000 people. While we talk about this legislation applying to cities of greater than 25,000 people, it does not matter a continental whether a city has greater or fewer than 25,000 people. The people who are elected to represent people in those communities in question, whether they be smaller ones or larger ones, have a right to voice their concern and address the issues in question. Yes, prostitution is an issue that has to be managed, that has to be controlled. I know the good moral values that the member for Mount Isa upholds and believes in. He is certainly right in saying that we have to manage the element that does pursue that type of lifestyle. We also have to manage the health issues in question.

These are all very valid issues that the honourable member has raised, but at the same time the present act denies that right to local government councils of greater than 25,000 people that are responsible for the administration of those areas. That is the point I raise here this evening: what is the difference between a shire, a town or any other community with a larger or smaller population? I will just dwell on Toowoomba for a moment. I know a little bit about it myself. My kids were educated there. It is a very family oriented town.

**Mr Foley:** Very fine teachers there.

**Mr JOHNSON:** They certainly are. His brother, Con, was a very able teacher at the Downlands College where my son was a student. The children of the honourable member for Toowoomba South were students there, too—and very successful ones. The point I do make is that, while Toowoomba boasts having all those schools and it boasts having many other good things, it is no different from Bundaberg, Rockhampton, Townsville, Cairns or any other city in this state. It is no different from the greater Brisbane area, the Gold Coast, the Sunshine Coast or any other area. This is about listening to the leaders of the community.

The Honourable Minister for Police, the member for Mount Isa, was right tonight in saying that we as legislators have the right to put in place the type of legislation that we believe is best for our state—for the administration of our state and for the wellbeing of our people. That is what the honourable member for Toowoomba South is endeavouring to do here: speak again for people in these larger communities. They do not want these establishments in their communities for the obvious reason that it is an indictment on the moral values of that community, the families in that community or however else you want to interpret it. It is about a principle that I believe nobody in this House desires,

but at the same time there are people out there who are involved in prostitution and we have to address it.

In this instance, the simple demand is that every local council should have the same rights, on behalf of its population, to make the decisions based on what the local community wants. If we cannot listen to what those councils or people are saying, we are not true to the charter of this institution or to the reasons why we are here representing the people whom we were elected to represent. Whilst not all people in our electorates support us at the ballot box, the majority of those people do, whether a member is from the government side, the National Party side, the Liberal Party side, the Independents, the One Nation side or wherever. Those people chose us as their representatives and they chose us to speak for them. That is why I believe that this piece of legislation that the honourable member for Toowoomba South is putting before the parliament gives us an opportunity to speak for our communities.

I represent an electorate in which we do not have any of those towns or cities with more than 25,000 people. I am probably very fortunate that we are not going to be subjected to this type of legislation. However, I know that here in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and all of the other bigger cities in the coastal regions, communities are subjected to this. The real issue is giving the real people—the people who live and work in these communities—the say.

**Mr Cummins:** That's us.

**Mr JOHNSON:** That is us. That is why we are elected.

**Mr Cummins:** We make the decision, not them.

**Mr JOHNSON:** I take that interjection. I respect the honourable member's right to make that interjection. He represents one of those areas where there is a larger population. I bet him that if he consults with a lot of those folk whom he represents in close proximity to him—

**Mr Cummins:** They voted for him on this bill and everything else that this bill represents. They had a choice.

**Mr JOHNSON:** The member is not listening. I bet him that that was an issue that was far from their minds. I bet that if he takes that back to his community now a lot of people will not condone what he is saying.

**Mr Cummins:** Prostitutes are over the road and work the streets. They live two doors over the road from me. Get them off the streets and into a brothel.

**Mr JOHNSON:** The member is not listening. It seems to me that—

**Mr Horan:** Once she gets a pick-up she is working the street. That is illegal.

**Mr JOHNSON:** That is dead right. That is absolutely dead right.

**Mr Cummins:** The police know that. Ring the Kawana police. I agree with you fully.

**Mr JOHNSON:** Absolutely right! The point is that we should be putting in place some other mechanism—

**Mr Cummins** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Kawana will cease interjecting.

**Mr JOHNSON:** I notice that the Minister for Police made reference to the drug issue within our society, which is one of the reasons why a lot of these people are driven to this profession. Unfortunately, I do not believe that legislation that is going to open up brothels within our community is the answer to trying to rid drugs from our society.

I take on board what the minister said about the current law in the ACT. I do not agree with that either, but at the same time I do not agree with the representatives of these communities not being listened to by the legislators of this chamber. On the way out of the chamber earlier tonight I was speaking to a member of the government. That person mentioned an issue that I have been speaking about today, as have other members of this parliament, that is, a bipartisan approach. I believe that a bipartisan approach is the constructive and healthy way to go. That is exactly what the Leader of the Opposition is trying to pursue with the legislation this evening. He has deliberated over this issue and put this legislation before the House because he is trying to help not only Toowoomba but also other cities and communities throughout this state become better communities by having better legislation to enable them to be safer and healthier for the people who live there.

I say to honourable members on the other side: the opposition does not just introduce legislation such as this for the heck of it. Members should bear in mind that 72 per cent of the legislation which passes through this chamber is agreed to by both sides. For the life of me, I cannot see why legislation such as this—an amendment to a piece of very serious legislation—should not be given the bipartisan support that it deserves. At the end of the day, this legislation is about looking after communities, listening to what communities are saying and what the leaders of those communities are

saying in their efforts to make those communities more livable whilst giving open and accountable representation to the people who live in the region.

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