



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR NOOSA

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**COMMUNITY SERVICES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL
INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES LIQUOR LICENCES BILL**

Ms MOLLOY: (Noosa—ALP) (6.33 p.m.): This evening I rise in the House to speak to the Indigenous Communities Liquor Licences Bill 2002 and the Community Services Legislation Amendment Bill 2002. One may ask: what would an urban dweller from a town in the south know about indigenous communities, let alone the issues confronting them? I suggest the degradation wrought on these communities is meticulously well documented, possibly not unlike the degradation experienced by white Europeans during early industrialisation. Today there is hope. There exists a will of the indigenous communities, their leaders and a strong political will from this Labor government to take action that will make a difference.

Some years ago I worked in Darwin Hospital and travelled through the Kimberleys meeting with members of indigenous communities up there. My sister Bridget taught in an indigenous community school in Alice Springs and now teaches at Darwin High School. We have talked at length about the troubled children for whom some a cuddle was unknown, food and clothing were scant in their tiny lives, and violence was their familiar home environment. My deceased brother, Michael, lived in an indigenous community in Alice Springs. His partner broke his arm. He had to leave Alice Springs because of the tribal brawling. He then moved to Darwin and married a Torres Strait Islander. He died at the age of 50. He lived the life that many indigenous people live. I know he had a troubled soul and chose a destructive lifestyle, but let us not forget that alcoholism is a disease. I wonder often whether, if we stripped away the trappings of our material world and lumped all of the white alcoholics in one suburb, how we would deal with that. That is food for thought.

The Community Services Legislation Amendment Bill will amend the Community Services (Aborigines) Act 1984 Queensland and the Community Services (Torres Strait) Act 1984 to recognise existing CJGs and enable the establishment of others and confer power on them to make dry place declarations. Let us not think this is patronising, either, which could be suggested. I grew up in a dry area. I grew up in Bob Menzies' electorate of Kooyong, and it was a very dry argument there.

Recently, on 23 August, I had the great pleasure of visiting Leon Towsk, who celebrated his 100th birthday. Leon used to live in the same dry area that I grew up in and we enjoyed our time together remembering the good old days in Balwyn. There was wisdom in that decision. It was a decision made by the community who decided that a local pub in the suburbs was nothing more than a nuisance. How often do members hear of complaints from the public about unruly behaviour of pub and club patrons as they fall out the door at night?

I turn to point 4.2, which deals with controlling possession and consumption of alcohol at dry places. The Cape York Justice Study noted that the act attempted to link the operations of Aboriginal custom and tradition with those of the mainstream legal systems and regarded the meeting and consultation process for declaring a dry area or control area as one that acknowledges the political life of indigenous people. The justice study states that the act allows more appropriate dealing with the illicit alcohol trade into the community, since access roads, the barge landing and the airport have been declared control areas, with limits placed on alcohol carried by any particular vehicle. It stated further that this potentially allows for more effective policing of the types and quantities of alcohol brought in.

The act allows individuals to have a degree of control over what happens in their own houses or out-stations or on their own traditional lands while preserving the rights of drinkers to have access to alcohol. What a way to go—more control over what happens in their own homes.

Minister Spence and her staff work tirelessly to help these indigenous communities take control. There are many aspects of this bill that tell me that this government is sincere in its attempt to provide support to the people who need it most. Hindsight is a wonderful thing. That is why we are able to come back to the table to sort out what needs to be done. But, please, let us not be naive enough to think that Minister Spence has a wand and will make these communities heal overnight. The healing will take time. But as we say in our house, sometimes you just have to bite the bullet. In this case, it could also be seen as tough love. I congratulate the minister who at times must be overwhelmed by the responsibility of her ministry and community expectations. She is working with the indigenous communities to help them help themselves. I commend the bill to the House.
