



Speech by

CHRIS CUMMINS

MEMBER FOR KAWANA

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TOBACCO LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr CUMMINS (Kawana—ALP) (2.30 p.m.): I believe it was Max Beerbohm who said: no fine work can be done without concentration and self-sacrifice and toil and doubt. The Minister for Health has put a lot of concentration and toil into this legislation before us and I have no doubt that it will be very beneficial.

The Tobacco Legislation Amendment Bill 2002 is part of the government's ongoing commitment to reducing the community's exposure to the harmful effects of passive smoking. The Beattie Labor government has introduced increased penalties for selling tobacco products to children, mandatory training for employees, a ban on tobacco advertising inside retail outlets, restrictions on tobacco product displays, a ban on tobacco product competitions and promotions, and the requirement that enclosed places should be smoke free.

Under the legislation passed in May 2001, bingo sessions in community halls must be nonsmoking, while bingo sessions in liquor licensed premises allow smoking. Charities across Queensland are concerned that this will result in a significant loss of patronage, substantial loss of fundraising revenue and the closure of many community service organisations. This appears to be based on a fear that bingo players who smoke will move to smoking permitted bingo at their local club. It is claimed that up to 75 per cent of bingo players are smokers and that players have said they will go elsewhere if it means they can play bingo and continue to smoke.

Today's amendment to the tobacco laws corrects this anomaly by taking a consistent approach; that is, from 31 May all bingo will be nonsmoking. Specifically, from 31 May it will be an offence to smoke in a bingo area of a liquor licensed premises 30 minutes immediately before a bingo session and during that session. To maintain consistency across legislation, the definitions for bingo and bingo sessions used in the bill are the same as those used in the Charitable and Non-Profit Gaming Act 1999. Smoking will not be permitted in bingo areas, whether in liquor licensed or unlicensed premises. This requirement is similar to the no smoking requirement for dining areas in liquor licensed premises.

The health of bingo players must also be considered. Friday, 31 May 2002 is World No Tobacco Day. It will be an important milestone for public health. Queensland's new tobacco legislation, including no smoking in all bingo areas, comes into effect from that date.

One of my biggest battles in life is to refrain from smoking. I can remember when I first picked up a cigarette as a child, over 30 years ago. I will always regret being a rebellious lad who thought that smoking was tough and cool. It is not. My grandfather, Tom Cummins—whose wife, Gladys, loved to play bingo—was a crane driver in the North Ipswich railway workshops and he had a similar problem or weakness to me—not for bingo, but for tobacco. He had a nicotine addiction. I regret the damage I have caused to my body by smoking and possibly to others who have been affected by the passive smoke that I have produced. Smoking is not cool and it is not tough. In fact, I believe it is tough not to smoke. It is much cooler to live a full life, to be healthy, to be happy and to be free of nicotine—and to enjoy bingo. I am proud to be a part of this Beattie Labor government and I fully support all its endeavours in reducing the effects of smoking.

The minister, the Hon. Wendy Edmond, is disappointed in those of us who are at times weak and, I believe, stupid when we smoke. The minister is an asset to this government. The minister is doing good work in one of the toughest portfolios—Health.

In the past, bingo has been a very big part of my life. My parents were fundraisers for the St Edmond's school at Ipswich and for the Ipswich Junior Rugby League. We regularly worked the bingo hall or, as it was in those days, the Trades and Labour Hall before it was demolished, probably over a decade ago.

Mrs Miller: That's right.

Mr CUMMINS: Bingo was held on a Friday night and it was very well attended. It was a very good fundraiser for we Catholics and Rugby League supporters.

Charles Reade once said: Not a day passes over the earth but men and women of no note do great deeds, speak great words and suffer noble sorrows. Therefore, I commend the bill to the House.