



Speech by

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

Mr CUMMINS: (Kawana—ALP) (6.24 p.m.): I support these most important bills before us tonight, namely the Community Services Legislation Amendment Bill 2002 and the Indigenous Communities Liquor Licences Bill 2002. For many years Queensland governments have sought solutions to the issues of alcohol and violence in indigenous communities. The Beattie government, in partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, is committed to the development and implementation of policies and programs that have at their core the basis for building the capacity of communities to find solutions to problems. We need a positive partnership to address the issues. The Beattie government's support must also be ensured. Capacity building is the most reliable and effective means by which communities can develop and secure sustainable futures. This liquor licensing and community services legislation sets down in law the tools for communities to build their capacity and shape their own futures.

With this legislation the Beattie government has empowered communities to work effectively in partnership with government to address the problems of alcohol abuse and violence. This legislation provides for a new community based approach to alcohol management and the development of alcohol management plans developed by and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The legislation empowers community justice groups to take the lead role in community based mechanisms to redress alcohol abuse and violence. It recognises that a community based approach to alcohol management will work most effectively with a whole-of-community input and support. Within communities, everyone has a potential contribution to make towards the development of management plans and approaches that reflect their own specific needs and circumstances. This new legislation enshrines in the very laws of this state the right of indigenous communities to be supported in the development of appropriate, effective, community based solutions to the issues of alcohol and violence. We realise that there is a need for sustainable economic development and job creation that will provide the economic independence and self-determination that communities aspire to.

The Indigenous Communities Liquor Licences Bill 2002 comprises the integral part of the legislative package that will carry out the government's reform agenda to address alcohol abuse and violence in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. There are currently licensed premises in 12 of the 19 mainland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. All of these licences are held within community councils. In his report, Justice Fitzgerald recommended that councils should not run licensed premises because this conflicts with their responsibilities relating to the welfare of the community. Justice Fitzgerald also said that the current arrangements place an intolerable burden on councils and council officials.

The bill enables the government to create new community liquor licence boards under a regulation. These boards will be comprised of a small number of community members and a government representative. They will be accountable as statutory bodies. This bill enables the government to transfer the general liquor licence from the council to the board if this is considered necessary to prevent harm caused by alcohol abuse in the community.

Recently I attended a leadership forum with Paul Paulson, an Australian Aborigine and descendant from the Mununjali people from the Yugembeh Language Group in south-east Queensland. Paul is employed as the indigenous education officer of the Anglican Schools Office in Queensland. I thank him for passing on some of his thoughts, issues and beliefs that I will now touch on. In traditional society, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people had no kings or queens. They had elders. Elders passed on their traditional laws and rules which were handed down to them by their spiritual beings. As we know, Australia enjoys a colourful and proud empirical history of an emerging nation built on immigration, diversity and a fair go for everybody. It is thought the indigenous people of this country have occupied this country possibly for 60,000 years. The free flowing, conservative, nomadic style of the existence enjoyed by our nation's first people was a successful one. Each group knew of their tribal boundaries. It could be argued that there were no major wars or possibly no famine.

Prior to European settlement, historians estimate that the large Aboriginal population was dispersed among the 700 recorded Aboriginal and Torres Strait tribal and language groups. Each language group had its own distinct language and customs. Each group identified its own subculture by its own art, song, dance, ceremonies and leisure times. Whilst every language group was uniquely diverse in various aspects of culture, they were all spiritually connected by the universal power of The Dreaming.

Realising that we now live in the 21st century—a new millennium—we all face new challenges. The challenges today are certainly more diverse and dangerous than 20 years ago—even two years ago. Our western society today has been forced to redefine the word 'terrorism'. It is now, more than ever, a threat to the very fabric of our westernised democratic existence.

In difficult times our community looks to effective leaders. Leadership and success can signify different things to different people. Anyone's first success is to try. Exercising your right to dream and to realise and fulfil those dreams is a measure of leadership and success. We should all acknowledge that a famous peace advocate once announced 'I have a dream.' I believe that we must acknowledge that indigenous people in this country are still traumatised by our history. It is a legacy with which individuals and communities live and it is shaping the lives of subsequent generations. While indigenous people in this country are often considered to be disadvantaged through education, housing, health and social justice, they can and should and will remain a vibrant and essential part of the Australian identity and future decision making in forging our national citizenship.

To ensure reconciliation remains part of our national agenda, all Queenslanders should learn about Aboriginal culture and engage in a multicultural Australia. In my opinion, 'multicultural Australia' means recognising that everyone belongs to a cultural group, accepting and appreciating cultural diversity as a positive feature of our society, multiculturalism is for everyone, recognising that similarities across cultures are much greater than differences, cultural pluralism is a positive aspect for our country, affirming and enhancing self-esteem through pride in heritage, promoting cross-cultural understanding, citizenship and racial harmony. I believe indigenous people do not want our sympathy. They seek equality not because they are black but because they are people who share this land and its future with us. They ask for respect because their dignity has not and will not waiver. They seek recognition because their culture is thousands of years old; they do not want it to die and neither should we.

Members should remember that racism is borne of ignorance and ignorance stems from lack of understanding and knowledge. The indigenous people of Australia have long struggled to regain pride and identity through the past two centuries. Australia's reconciliation process is a perfect catalyst for everyone to learn a little more about our nation's first people and understand the importance of preserving culture and tradition in a society where there is a place in the sun for everyone—black, white or whatever.

A great leader once said, 'Keep your fears to yourself, but share your courage.' The ability to inspire others and to adduce out the best qualities in others is a gift. Great leaders avoid paternalism and encourage self-esteem, which generates and releases capabilities and skills. It involves commitment, usually emotional commitment, whether it is anger or passion. Both are regularly displayed in this House, the Queensland parliament. Importantly, trust is an integral part of any leadership. Trust can be gained by possessing a willingness to listen and recognise that no-one has a monopoly on the truth. Honourable members should remember that differences can be presented as an opportunity rather than an obstacle. For all men created alike in the image of God are inseparably bound together—this is at the very heart of our Christian gospel.

In life, ethical and moral dilemmas will confront us in our pursuit of our dreams. We will always know that being bound by Christian ethical and moral values and abiding by and being true to these principles that leadership and conscience will reap the greatest reward for all Queenslanders. We must acknowledge that wives, mothers, fathers, husbands, children and elders are calling on us to assist them and help them in their battle. No-one should be foolish enough to ever suggest that alcohol abuse is limited to any one group in particular; it can affect us all.

Minister—and I believe this relates to all of our cabinet—Sunshine Coast residents have applauded you on the position we take on this issue. I must also acknowledge the Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads, the member for Cook, in addressing alcohol issues in Queensland Aboriginal communities. I believe the outcomes will be something of which all Labor members will be proud—and, indeed, of which all Queenslanders should acknowledge and be proud. Again, these are great reforms by this Beattie Labor government for deserving Queenslanders.

In conclusion, I will mention a very close family friend, Harry Allie, who received a BEM—British Empire Medal—a few years ago. Harry is an Aboriginal from Charters Towers who worked in the RAAF with my father for over two decades serving our country in its defence force. As a young man in the 1950s he worked for the then PMG on Magnetic Island installing telecommunication or phone lines. Harry is one of the thousands of indigenous Australians who are a credit to our Australian society, and I pray that this legislation will greatly assist and benefit our indigenous communities. I commend the bill to the House.