



Speech by

CHRISTINE SMITH

MEMBER FOR BURLEIGH

Hansard 16 May 2002

TOBACCO LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mrs SMITH (Burleigh—ALP) (11.57 a.m.): I am pleased to support the Tobacco Legislation Amendment Bill 2002, which will prohibit smoking in bingo areas of licensed premises during bingo sessions. The amending act gives effect to key aspects of the Queensland Tobacco Action Plan and the government's commitment to reducing exposure to passive smoking. This plan includes actions to address the dangers of passive smoking and the incidence of smoking in particular sectors of the community—including among children—as well as the need to encourage and support smokers of all ages and in all walks of life to give up this addictive habit.

Each year over 3,000 Queenslanders lose their lives because of tobacco smoking. Tobacco is extremely harmful and extremely addictive. We would be failing in our duty as leaders of this state if we did not do our utmost to both decrease the number of current smokers and discourage new smokers. The entire death toll from smoking in Queensland is higher than the combined number of people killed in Queensland by murder, suicide, alcohol, illicit drugs, AIDS, poisoning, drowning and motor vehicle accidents. This is a frightening statistic. The financial burden of smoking on the Queensland community is enormous. The financial costs through loss of productivity, sickness, absenteeism and the impact of premature death, not to mention staggeringly high health care costs, tip the scales at \$2.2 billion each and every year. One of the most frightening parts of the current research is the devastating impact on young people. The number of young smokers has increased dramatically over recent years. Between 1990 and 1999 the youth smoking rate has increased from 15 per cent to 23 per cent. An estimated 65,000 students in high school are smokers. We need to act quickly to help improve this terrible statistic. That is why my colleague the Minister for Health has introduced this legislation.

The provisions of the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products (Prevention of Supply to Children) Amendment Act 2001 are set to commence on 31 May. They include increased penalties for selling tobacco products to children, a ban on tobacco advertising inside retail outlets, restrictions on tobacco product displays, and a ban on tobacco product competitions and promotions. It is hoped that these moves will act to deter young people from taking up smoking or discourage them from continuing to smoke. The fact that 65,000 schoolchildren smoke, nearly all of whom must be underage, is a frightening statistic. Obviously, a large number of unscrupulous traders are selling these addictive and dangerous products to consumers too young to understand the consequences. Tougher penalties needed to be introduced to prevent this practice from continuing.

Another important aspect of the act relates to the rights of nonsmokers as well as providing a disincentive to smokers. That is the requirement that enclosed places should be smoke free. This has been accepted and assimilated quite well by the dining and hotel industry. However, it has become apparent that the application of part 2B, Smoke free enclosed places, of the 2001 amendment act may disadvantage charitable and community organisations and their ability to raise funds from various indoor activities. Many community groups and organisations rely on the funds they garner from indoor games and activities. The spotlight has been focused on bingo, this being an extremely popular pastime, especially in my electorate.

As of 31 May 2002, smoking will be prohibited in community halls and other non-liquor licensed premises where bingo may be played, but will not be prohibited in non-dining areas of licensed premises where bingo may be played. Charitable and community organisations that raise funds from bingo are concerned that if the legislation is allowed to proceed in its present form they will suffer a

substantial loss of revenue and, as a consequence, the potential closure of many community service organisations.

Evidence of the impact of similar legislation in New South Wales clearly shows that in New South Wales many bingo players who smoke moved from smoke free bingo halls to bingo conducted in registered clubs where smoking was still permitted. A very successful bingo session is held every week in the great hall of the Miami State High School. This raises valuable revenue for the school P&C, which in turn provides resources for the students that they might not otherwise have. There was great consternation when the smoking legislation was introduced. I attended a bingo session at Miami High and calculated that at least 85 per cent of the players were also smokers. They told me that they would go elsewhere if they could play bingo and continue to smoke. This legislation had the potential to decimate the bingo sessions and thus the financial contribution to Miami High would have been lost. The health of bingo players must also be considered. Over the last 20 years we have been provided with conclusive evidence that passive smoking is dangerous. There is no safe level of exposure to environmental tobacco smoke. Any degree of exposure to passive smoking is potentially harmful.

Today's amendment to the tobacco laws corrects an anomaly by having a consistent approach, that is, from 31 May all bingo venues will be no smoking. Specifically, it will be an offence to smoke in the bingo area of liquor licensed premises 30 minutes immediately before a bingo session and during the session. The definitions for 'bingo' and 'bingo session' used in the bill are the same as those used in the Charitable and Non-Profit Gaming Act 1999.

The amendments in the bill are another important step in addressing the human and economic costs of smoking. A study revealed that in 1996-97 more than 185,000 hospital bed days were attributed to smoking related conditions, costing the Queensland Health system over \$108 million. I offer my congratulations to the Minister for Health on this timely amendment, and I look forward to the health of Queenslanders reaping the rewards of the minister's good work.