



Speech by

CARRYN SULLIVAN

MEMBER FOR PUMICESTONE



Hansard 28 October 2003

PUBLIC HEALTH [INFECTION CONTROL FOR PERSONAL APPEARANCE SERVICES] BILL

Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN (Pumicestone—ALP) (11.58 p.m.): I rise tonight to contribute to the Public Health (Infection Control for Personal Appearance Services) Bill 2003. The member for Nudgee referred to his family situation with regard to his teenager daughters. I will briefly touch on my family situation. As a parent of two teenage daughters I have had many a discussion with both of them on the topic of body piercing and tattooing. I had some success in steering the conversation away to another topic. After a lengthy warning about infection and after hearing a number of speeches tonight, I feel somewhat vindicated.

The discussions and warnings worked to a point, until my elder daughter, Casey, turned 18. She then decided that she knew best and proceeded to have her tongue pierced with a metal stud. My genuine fear was that her tongue would get infected and I tried to convince her to have the stud removed. I sent Casey an article that described the effect that metal studs had on the tongue and the statistics which show that most people who used metal studs did, in fact, get an infection and some even got blood poisoning.

A government member: And they talk funny, too.

Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN: My daughter did talk with a lisp, but I did understand when she still wanted money. The metal actually reacts with the sensitive tongue tissue and this is what causes the blood poisoning. Fortunately, after reading the article, Casey had the stud removed and I was certainly very grateful that she actually took some notice. My youngest daughter, Tai, still lives at home. She has hassled me quite a bit about body piercing but so far I have won. There is still plenty of time, I guess, for the arguments to continue. I am delighted now to stand up here and support any measure that will help minimise the risk of infection that may result particularly from the provision of skin penetration services.

I am certainly not the only parent, as we have heard tonight, who has had these concerns. Only the other day I had a phone call from a constituent who was horrified that her 15-year-old son had had his tongue pierced without her written permission, and he refused to tell her who performed it. I believe that most people employed in personal appearance services would get the permission of parents rather than just go ahead, particularly for one so young. Unfortunately, in any industry there is always one who will put money ahead of safety.

By introducing this bill, the state government is showing its commitment to ensuring that adequate measures will exist to minimise the infection risks to the public when they receive personal appearance services. As we have heard before, most personal appearance activities—for example, hairdressing—pose only a minor risk of infection while tattooing and body piercing pose a much higher risk of transmitting serious blood-borne diseases like HIV and hepatitis C, which are becoming more prevalent in the Western World.

The current legislation was reviewed under the national competition policy. Also, a public benefit test and a risk assessment were undertaken as part of the review. The public benefit test report concluded that a two-tiered regulatory model for personal appearance services was the best method of achieving the legislation's aim of minimising infection risks while being mindful of not restricting competition. This regulatory model imposes an obligation on all personal appearance services to minimise infection risk to clients, but will now require higher risk personal appearance services to be licensed. I know that when I told my constituent who rang last week about the licensing she was very

grateful. She knows it will not help her son because he has already had his tongue pierced, but she is quite confident that it will help others.

Like the current legislation, the bill will be monitored, administered and enforced by local governments, which have been extensively consulted along with the service industry itself and consumers. Licensing guidelines will be based permanently on the applicant's suitability to hold a licence and the suitability of the premises as well. In addition, personal service providers must hold a prescribed infection control qualification. These changes should go a long way towards the protection of the community. I commend the bill to the House.