



Speech by

**CHRIS FOLEY**

**Member for MARYBOROUGH**

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Hansard 14 October 2003

**POLICE SERVICE ADMINISTRATION [ALCOHOL AND DRUG TESTING] AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mr CHRIS FOLEY** (Maryborough—Ind) (9.51 p.m.): I rise to speak in support of this bill. Edmund Burke, the political statesman, said no government ought to exist for the purpose of checking the prosperity of its people or to allow such a principle in its policy. Clearly, what we do not want to see in our society is too much of a big brother attitude. However, to me, this piece of legislation makes commonsense.

In his second reading speech, the minister stated—

... when faced with huge responsibilities of protecting and serving the public and bringing violent criminals to justice, some people may resort to alcohol or illicit drugs as a relief from the stressful circumstances they find themselves in. In some cases that stress may even lead to chronic substance abuse.

I accept that all of that is true and I have nothing other than praise for the members of the Queensland Police Service. However, there must be a certain standard of safety. As a private pilot, our rules and regulations are very clear on the use of alcohol and flying aeroplanes. Clearly, just to identify that people have problems is only half the story. If a Queensland police officer is caught out over the limit under the new laws, whilst they are subject to disciplinary proceedings and even worse, it is also worth remembering that they perhaps need some very serious counselling and some bigger questions asked as to what caused the stresses and strains that led to their being addicted to these substances.

Also in his second reading speech the minister stated that there is a responsibility to ensure that the public integrity of the Police Service is maintained. Obviously, from a community perspective, integrity equals credibility. If police act in a way which is not in the manner of the integrity and public behaviour expected of the rest of society, that creates a problem of its own.

In some respects, the role of police officers—we see this with PCYC clubs and also their presence at the Ekka, police stands and so on—is one of mentoring, especially for young people. If we are to ever see police as role models for young people, it would be incongruous to allow them to be carrying guns and driving cars at high speed and all of the other things that members who have spoken to this bill have identified and then allow them to be abusing alcohol and drugs. I guess in some respects the whole question of credibility is something that must be looked at very carefully.

I note also from the second reading speech that the minister stated the intent of this bill is that, if a problem is identified, rehabilitation is the preferred option in the interests of the officer and the community at large. Zeroing in on the community at large for a start, there are many people other than Police Service staff in our state who suffer from long-term problems with drugs. Even doctors who are subjected to ridiculous working hours can find themselves sometimes resorting to substance abuse to help them get through what can be a very difficult time. As long as that rehabilitation is done from a compassionate perspective rather than being seen as a regime of punishment, I have no problems supporting the bill. I think it makes commonsense and I commend it to the House.