



Speech by

**DESLEY BOYLE**

**MEMBER FOR CAIRNS**

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Hansard 7 October 2003

#### **LIQUOR AMENDMENT BILL**

**Ms BOYLE** (Cairns—ALP) (3.03 p.m.): I am pleased to join other members of the House in supporting the Liquor Amendment Bill 2003, which in its substance is about mandatory training for liquor licensees. I wish I was able to tell honourable members that this training would be superfluous for licensees in Cairns, but I cannot. Unfortunately, we have some licensees who can improve their act, who can learn a lot more than they apparently already know about the responsible service of alcohol.

As members would expect in a tourist city such as Cairns, with its fine pioneering private sector history, we have a large sector in terms of restaurants, bars and venues. Many of these are up to date and offer the latest kind of entertainment for their segment of the market and most are well and responsibly run. As is commonly said, there are cowboys in every industry and, unfortunately, there are certainly some in the liquor industry in Cairns. In fairness to them, it is probably made harder in the present climate by tremendous competition amongst the large number of venues for what is relatively a small resident population, even allowing for the tourists who come to town and their particular needs. Those one or two venues run by licensees who are either themselves irresponsible or, alternatively, not in control of their staff give the industry a bad name. Our contribution through this bill towards encouraging them in the strongest terms to improve their understanding of the responsible service of alcohol will be welcomed in Cairns.

Unfortunately, as recently as last week we saw news in our local paper about a dreadful scuffle that occurred between two fellows in the early hours of the morning after they left a venue. As I understand it, both were under the influence of a large amount of alcohol and a death was the consequence of that scuffle. Such incidents should not occur in Cairns or anywhere else. We also know that, unfortunately, relative to other centres in Queensland, Cairns has a high proportion of complaints of domestic violence reported to police. We know from the complainants that alcohol consumed to excess is frequently involved and that these incidents that are reported to the police too frequently occur after a man comes home drunk from a venue. It is not responsible service of alcohol when people are served to the point where they are staggering and out of control of their faculties. Our society is clearly saying that we do not want this anymore. We will not have it anymore.

I, therefore, support this bill with its main objective of improving responsible service and of providing that applicants for a new liquor licence or those who wish to transfer their licence must undergo suitable training. Other members who have spoken before me have expressed the importance of the quality of that training and I, too, support their comments in that regard. I am hoping that those who are first to be trained will recognise for themselves the tremendous benefits but thereafter seek to perpetuate that training down the line and amongst all of their staff and at, quite appropriately, the cost of the licensees.

In a good number of venues—and this is so in Cairns—many of the employees are casual employees. Sometimes they are young people on holidays passing through. It would therefore be a considerable impost for the licensee to provide training for all employees, yet that is what we are coming to. We will start, however, with the licensees. I note that the legislation does allow the department and senior officers to require licensees to undergo training as part of a disciplinary mechanism. I hope that that provision is not often required, but nonetheless I applaud that it is there for those licensees who are recalcitrant in recognising that they have a responsibility to serve alcohol wisely.

Although it may not seem so to those licensees concerned about the amount of money going through their tills this week or next, I do believe that the competition between venues in a place like Cairns is good. It will mean that those venues where patrons feel safe, where they feel that they can have a few drinks without being harassed by others, will prosper. If people know that other patrons of that venue will not be served when they are drunk or aggressive or behaving badly and that they can look forward to returning to such venues, those venues—the good ones where there is responsible service of alcohol—will be the profitable venues over the long term.

I am pleased to support the bill. I am sure that many others in Cairns would join me, were they here today, in applauding the minister and her department, as well as, I must say, all of those members of the industry who have through their representatives cooperated with us on the development of the provisions. The alcohol industry is a very large one, of course. Many of the outlets are diverse in their style. Therefore, the implementation of training that is appropriate to the diversity of alcohol outlets has required the considerable input of industry. I recognise that and commend the leaders of the industry for their good efforts in this regard.

There is no doubt that we in Queensland, and I am sure parliamentarians in other states, need to do more about alcohol. It has unfortunately been out of control in its use by too many people. We have seen in this parliament the tremendous initiatives that have been undertaken on Aboriginal communities in the north and west of our state. The alcohol management plans are now in place for most of those communities. Though it is early days yet, we have already seen indications of the benefits.

Previously I have spoken in this House about the actions taken to address the public drunkenness problems we have had in the past in the CBD of Cairns during daylight hours. This bill will contribute, along with other efforts, towards ensuring responsible service of alcohol, which means of course that, while those patrons may enjoy a reasonable amount of alcohol, people are less likely to be turned out of the venues in a drunken and aggressive state and less likely to cause harm to others.

A sobering statistic is that it is estimated that 70,000 patients are admitted to Australian hospitals every year with alcohol related problems. The average length of stay for these patients is seven days. That means that there are indeed serious problems caused by alcohol or related to alcohol. There is no doubt that we need to ensure its use is proper, sensible and under reasonable control. I do indeed support this bill.