



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

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COMMUNITY SERVICES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (10.29 p.m.): On behalf of the member for Currumbin, who is the Liberal Party shadow minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs, I am proud to say that the Liberal Party supports the Community Services and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2004. The bill will provide the option for indigenous councils to outlaw the home-brewing of alcohol in areas where it is undermining the alcohol management plans.

As a new member in this House, I was concerned about delivering a speech about something that I am not necessarily particularly au fait with. I thought that it was very interesting to hear the contribution from the member for Mount Isa and other members who gave a number of heartfelt examples about what happens in these communities. I can honestly say that, as the member for Surfers Paradise, I have not been up to these areas. In fact, as I heard these members speak, I looked up my parliamentary record and at the map at the front. It is interesting to get an insight into some of the things that are happening in these communities. I realise now the personal nature of some of the things that we have heard this evening. It certainly makes me realise just what a broad spectrum of communities we have in Queensland and how important it is to think about various aspects of life that many of us in more urban areas do not often think about. So I applaud the government for not making a blanket ban across all indigenous communities and leaving the choice to each community to determine if banning home-brew suits their needs.

The production of home-brew has become a problem in a few communities, especially in the shires of Aurukun and Mornington Island. This legislation will enable communities such as those to help further minimise the harm caused by violence and alcohol related injuries. One downside to this legislation is that indigenous communities that are affected by this legislation also have as members of their communities non-Aboriginals who work within the area such as police, teachers and nurses. The Teachers Union, the Public Sector Union and the Police Union have all raised concerns with the minister. The Queensland Public Sector Union General Secretary, Alex Scott, told the *Australian* that if bans went ahead the state government would have to come up with proper incentive packages for people to work in remote areas. That is a separate issue that will have to be addressed in the near future after the effects of prohibiting home-brewing can be properly evaluated in the communities that have enacted the legislation. But I am sure that things can be worked through in the interests of the people who reside in those communities.

I do not believe that we should be placing blame on anyone who is currently selling home-brew kits in these areas, as currently it is legal to do so. Unfortunately, it is sad that there are obviously unscrupulous individuals who take advantage of the fact that they are in isolated areas. Basically, they are operating a cartel. I know that we have seen that with normal alcohol sales, but to see that happening with home-brew kits just shows that some people will—

Mr Lawlor: They even do that in Surfers Paradise.

Mr LANGBROEK: That is right. I take that interjection. I have been to many dinner parties where I have taken sixpacks of Crown Lager and been offered a glass of home-brew.

Obviously, we should be asking why home-brew laws were not introduced in 2002 when the state government first introduced the alcohol managements plans. As I say, it is disappointing that there are members of the community who will always look for ways to get around the laws. It is often hard to legislate the behaviour of people who look for ways to get around legislation.

It has been reported in the *Cairns Post* that many elders are so concerned about the effects of home-brewing that many want to implement the legislation immediately. It is not uncommon for residents in remote alcohol-restricted communities to become violently ill after drinking their home-brew too early. I think that we heard some examples of that earlier this evening from another speaker. It is something that we would not think about as a normal way for people to behave when they purchase something like a home-brew kit. Unfortunately, a common practice is to distil the alcohol in the morning and to drink it in the afternoon.

A community justice group manager has expressed concerns that the implementation of this legislation will have a negative effect on many of the alcohol-dependent people within the communities who do not have access to rehabilitation or counselling services. If we are going to implement alcohol management plans, then we need to ensure that the support services are available to all communities, no matter how isolated they may be. I am sure that the minister would have made arrangements in that regard. We have a duty of care to all people within our communities to provide ongoing support and commitment. We just cannot rush in, make laws and then leave people in those communities to pick up the pieces.

If the government is serious about helping the Aboriginal communities, then we must first listen to the indigenous councils, ensure that support mechanisms are in place and then act in a timely manner. But, most importantly, we must respect Aboriginal culture and customs and comply with any laws that cover these areas, including not taking our own alcohol into restricted areas. I commend the bill to the House.