



Speech by
Lesley Clark

MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

Hansard Thursday, 11 November 2004

TOBACCO AND OTHER SMOKING PRODUCTS AMENDMENT BILL

Dr LESLEY CLARK (Barron River—ALP) (11.52 a.m.): I rise to proudly support the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Amendment Bill 2004. In my view, this is the most important piece of public health legislation that has been introduced by a Labor government since I was first elected in 1989. I make no apologies for the fact that this is the toughest legislation in Australia to restrict smoking. A total ban on indoor smoking in licensed premises will be effective from July 2006.

To reinforce the point I want to remind members of some statistics that confirm the seriousness of the health impacts of smoking and the cost to the community and business of this addiction. Smoking is the largest contributor to preventable mortality in Australia and is known to increase the risk of lung cancer, cardiovascular disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and several other conditions. From 1999 to 2001 there were an average of 3,402 deaths per annum attributable to tobacco smoking in Queensland. In 2001-02 it was estimated that 168,115 hospital bed days were directly attributed to smoking related conditions at a cost of \$137.8 million.

Passive smoking is a proven health hazard. Over 600 medical reports have been published linking passive smoking to diseases. From 1999 to 2001 in Queensland, environmental tobacco smoke caused an estimated 21 deaths per year in children aged zero to four years. It has been estimated that fires caused by smoking caused \$26.3 million in social costs, including public and private property damage and loss of life.

The total smoking related financial burden on the Queensland community is estimated at \$2.2 billion annually. This includes health care costs, loss of productivity through sickness and absenteeism and the impact of premature deaths. In 2000, Australian smokers diverted more than \$7 billion of their incomes to purchasing tobacco products. The total cost to Australian businesses in 1998-99 from production losses in the paid work force due to past and present tobacco use was estimated at over \$2 billion. These are all very sobering statistics.

I turn now to particular aspects of the bill. Nothing will convince me that any benefits of increased advertising, as requested by small independent retailers, outweighs the costs of smoking to the community as I have described them. I do not think smokers will change their buying habits. They will continue to get their cigarettes from their local corner store if that is what they currently do.

I commend the hotel and club industries for their cooperation with the legislation. The provision of small, specified outdoor areas where smokers can take drink away from the bar and food service areas strikes a good balance. Having visited Ireland earlier this year where smoking has been banned, there was no evidence that this had been anything but good for business. It will take more than a smoking ban to stop the Irish from singing and drinking in their pubs.

More cooperation with the state government from the Cairns City Council would have been appreciated, but that was never likely based on its past record. Maybe it will reconsider its stance when it sees how a partnership works with other councils whereby councils can retain fines imposed for smoking on patrolled beaches, in playgrounds and in other outdoor areas.

I particularly welcome the new measure to make it more difficult for young people under 18 to buy cigarettes. Large numbers, particularly girls, are still taking up smoking. Young people will no doubt be a particular target group of the major education campaign that will be launched about these public health reforms.

Finally, I turn to the issue of the loophole in the legislation that allows for the sale of bongs, the implements for smoking of marijuana—including at my Smithfield shopping centre. Clearly this is entirely inappropriate. I am pleased to know that the minister will be rectifying this situation.

While there may be some people who consider themselves losers from this legislation, they are far outweighed by the winners. Employees and patrons in clubs, pubs and restaurants and other victims of the effects of passive smoking, all those potential smokers who will never become addicted and those smokers who finally kick the habit are all likely to lead longer, healthier lives. Our community will have more money to spend on priorities to improve the quality of life for families across a range of areas.

This is undoubtedly historic legislation. I congratulate the minister and all those many people, both government and non-government, who have worked so hard over so many years to reach this point. I commend the bill to the House.