



Speech by

**Hon. Liddy Clark**

**MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD**

Hansard Wednesday, 20 October 2004

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## **COMMUNITY SERVICES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

**Hon. E.A. CLARK** (Clayfield—ALP) (Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy) (10.40 p.m.), in reply: I thank all members for their contributions this evening and for the bipartisan support for this important legislation—small in pages but hugely important for the communities. It is important, especially for the members for Cook and Mount Isa and a number of members who have a lot of the Aboriginal communities and remote communities in their electorates, to be there all the time to work with them and to understand them. What they give to us as Australians is enormous.

Being the minister in this portfolio has just given me so much—so much great learning, great understanding, an awareness of their culture and an awareness of how government does business. It is really important for all of us in this House to know that English is not their first language, so when we do business with them we have to understand that cultural difference and we need to be able to work with them in that way.

I thank the member for Gregory for his support. We are in communication and we are in agreement that the alcohol restrictions need the support of the community. There needs to be moral and ethical ownership of the restrictions. To have that we have to have really close communication. Like I said when I spoke to the previous bill debated this evening, it is about rolling up the sleeves, going out there—not flying in and flying out—spending time and talking about what the issues are for them on the ground. It has to be in total consultation.

The member for Surfers Paradise asked why this was not done in 2002. It is because of the importance of consultation. It was really clear to me when I came into this portfolio that I needed to get to know and understand the communities. I was not prepared—I take responsibility for that—to go ahead with the bill that was ready to go until I as the minister was comfortable that the communities wanted this. It was hugely important for me. Not only did they have to have ownership; I as the minister wanted to have ownership and understanding. That is why it was held over. I am really pleased that it was held over. As we go around and conduct the reviews of the alcohol restrictions and the management plans, we are able to talk to people about home-brew, substance abuse and addiction and about how they want to address that and how we as a government can pursue that. That is why the bill was held over, and I think it was really important for both parties to hold it over.

It has been a hard step. As we have heard from my colleague the very committed member for Mount Isa, what we do is not always popular. It is difficult and it is tough. There will be people who support and people who do not support. There will be people who do not like things being taken away, but we have to look at the bigger picture. I know that the women and children are tired and that the aunties and the grannies are really, really tired. We need to be able to go in and support them and make sure that the next generation can go to school and be supported.

We are continually consulting with the remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and listening to what they have to say. No-one is denying that there are still real problems in these communities. There is ongoing, and in some cases groundbreaking, work on education, health,

employment and all kinds of services and strategies. It has to be across-the-board. But the alcohol management plans are gaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people some ground. They are making a difference, and a difference is a strong start.

This government is not shying away from the many concerns which face Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. There is progress being made in all areas of the government's Meeting Challenges, Making Choices initiative. What we are talking about tonight is tackling a specific problem, and that problem is home-brew. I know that the members who have spoken tonight have spoken passionately and from the heart, and that makes me feel really fantastic. I know that the communities will be really pleased with that heartfelt passion.

I thank Minister McGrady for his words of support and for the sincerity of his concern for the people of Mornington Island and Doomadgee. I know that the member for Cook also feels deeply about the future of his Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander constituents. He is always an advocate for the people of the cape and it is always a joy to tour around the cape with him.

This bill simply delivers a way for a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to deal with an issue which is holding them back. The state government was made aware that in a small number of communities the production of home-brew was posing a threat to the effectiveness of the plans. It is a credit to the dedication of these communities that they have identified that danger and have approached the government to find a way to deal with this problem. We have not gone in and said, 'We are doing this.' They came to us. The plea has come from the people who want their alcohol restrictions to work effectively—people who want their community to have the best possible basis for the future. We have heard that this legislation means a home-brew ban for only the communities that need it. This legislation supports the alcohol management plans, it supports the community justice groups and it supports the communities themselves. The member for Mount Isa also pointed out how many home-brew kits were being sold. It is something we had to action.

In line with what the member for Surfers Paradise raised about the QPSU, the home-brew bans will apply to everybody living and working within any community in which they may be implemented. I have a letter from the QPSU actually supporting the implementation of the home-brew kits. The letter suggests to me that 'if it is saving lives then we support it'. I have also spoken recently with the Minister for Education and the Minister for Health. The people who work in these communities are aware of the restrictions. They know that when they take on the positions they are there to make a difference, and they are very supportive of what is happening.

I refer to the team on the ground at the moment—Col Dillon and his team doing the reviews. I was briefed on those reviews this week. All of the communities differ in their restrictions, but together they say that they are working, that they are really making a difference. We will go just this bit further, only for those communities that want it. It is done by regulation. It is the choice of the communities. We will regulate to ban the home-brew. It is a health issue. It is not good for people if they are drinking it green. As I said, the communities have asked us for this regulation, and I am very, very happy to actually do that.

Everyone is talking about how we work with the restrictions and move forward in the other areas. Education and health are hugely important. Nought to five is the area that we must concentrate on. We need to change the cycle of alcohol and abuse, and things will change.

As I said, I am very proud of everyone supporting this bill tonight. I think it is hugely important. To all the members who have travelled with me, I know that it has been an eye-opener and I know how supportive they are of equality for all Queenslanders. As the member for Woodridge mentioned, for a lot of young men the rite of passage is to drink and go to jail. That is a rite of passage that we cannot support. We talk about women and we talk about children, but this is really important for the men also. The men's groups are getting stronger. They are starting to come back and be the man of the family. It may sound old fashioned to us but that is what they need culturally. The men need that face. That will then support the women and the children. It is about understanding their culture and changing the cycle.

I thank everybody for their input tonight. We have heard all about the statistics where the plans are working, but tonight the focus is simply on home-brew. The state government has been asked for help, and tonight I am happy to deliver that assistance.