



Speech by

## Hon. Margaret Keech

MEMBER FOR ALBERT

Hansard Thursday, 21 October 2004

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### LIQUOR AMENDMENT BILL

**Hon. M.M. KEECH** (Albert—ALP) (Minister for Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development) (12.02 p.m.), in reply: I thank all members for supporting the bill. I particularly appreciate the opposition's support for the bill and also for the opposition members availing themselves of the opportunity to have a briefing from my department. I also thank the Liberal Party. The intent of the bill is to acknowledge the courage of the Beattie government in introducing last year the alcohol management plans. Clearly, the one objective of those plans is to save the lives of women and children who are victims of abuse in indigenous communities. This bill amends the alcohol restriction plans to ensure that those plans can be effectively enforced.

I thank the member for Beaudesert for supporting the bill. I acknowledge, as he did, that there are some concerns. The government always knew that there would be difficulties and challenges in introducing restricted areas in Cape York, but as a government we are committed to ensuring that we would save lives. We could not stand by and do nothing.

As has been indicated by the member for Cook, parts of the Torres Strait Islands is not covered by the restricted areas. The member for Cook spoke with some passion of his experience in the cape. Certainly, on Cape York, there are still some difficulties in relation to the control of the transport of alcohol. This amending bill recognises those difficulties.

Yes, the fines are tough and the Beattie government makes no excuses for that. The penalties are high, because the impact of alcohol on families and communities is extremely serious. However, the penalty of \$37,500 is the maximum penalty; it is not a mandatory penalty. The courts are allowed the discretion to take into account all the circumstances of individual cases. Certainly, as the member for Cook indicated, an individual with one can of beer will be treated differently by the courts compared to a sly grogger. Almost all members—both government and non-government members—spoke of the devastating effect of these sly groggers. Sly groggers focus on purely one thing: money. All they are interested in is making as much money as quickly as they can and making it from the indigenous communities. So certainly we need to have large fines to deter sly groggers. They are smart people. Unfortunately, they are preying on indigenous communities. Therefore, the maximum penalties are aimed at the sly groggers and certainly not the residents.

The member for Beaudesert raised the issue of what would happen if he hired a private plane, carrying alcohol, to fly from Cairns to Bamaga and was forced to land at Lockhart River. There are provisions in the legislation that allow for some discretion regarding emergency situations. However, if it is not an emergency situation and a plane lands in a restricted area, which allows no alcohol whatsoever, then that would be a breach of the legislation. In fact, in the event of an emergency landing, there is provision in the Criminal Code, as I said, to exempt persons from this legislation.

The member for Beaudesert also talked about Pajinka—the opportunities there for tourism and the fact that the area is in disrepair. He asked what the government is doing about that. The member for Aspley also discussed the opportunities for tourism on Cape York. As Tourism Minister, I believe that the tourism opportunities on Cape York are incredible. Cape York has the ability to become another Kakadu in

the future. But as the member for Beaudesert indicated, lots of issues need to be resolved. I am sure that in years to come, with Tourism Queensland working with the communities and the tourism operators up there, a lot of those issues will be able to be resolved and we will be able to take advantage of the incredible natural opportunities and resources that are available in Cape York.

I thank the members for Mudgeeraba and Aspley for their contributions. They also spoke about sly grogging. The member for Aspley passionately discussed how families in Cape York and other families throughout all of Queensland share the same hopes and aspirations for improving their quality of life. That is certainly what the Beattie government is doing with its Making Choices, Meeting Challenges paper.

The member for Hervey Bay also referred to sly grogging. He spoke about his visit to Weipa and Mapoon and how the alcohol restrictions are combating sly grogging. The member for Nicklin asked a couple of questions. One was about the number of tourism permits that have been issued. My advice is that, currently, only 10 tourism operators have been issued monthly permits. The Liquor Licensing Division has not been approached by any other operators seeking to carry alcohol through restricted areas. Any further permits will be issued on exactly the same terms as those that are currently issued, that is, with strict conditions—and the conditions are very strict. They ensure that when alcohol is being transported by the tourist operators it is secured within the vehicle, it is packaged and is not visible from outside.

The amendments to the bill indicate that tourist operators can apply for a season permit rather than apply for a permit on a case-by-case basis. This is to support the tourism industry in Cape York and reduce the significant amount of paperwork. The member for Nicklin also indicated that the amendments represent a commonsense approach. I certainly agree with him on that.

I thank the member for Cook for his response. I also thank him for his courage and leadership since he has become the member and prior to becoming the member, when he was a candidate, for working with the government on the whole issue of restricted areas. It has been a challenge for his community and a challenge for him, both professionally and privately. I commend him for the courage and the leadership he has shown to his community. His community looks to him for leadership, and that is exactly what he has given to his community. He should be very proud of that, as his community is proud of him. The Beattie government is proud of him and is proud to call him a very fine member of its team. As liquor licensing minister, I rely on the member for Cook for regular input about what is happening in Cape York. I have found his advice to be objective, fair, timely and accurate. I thank the member for that support. He also indicated that the fines for sly grogging do need to be high because sly grogging simply destroys lives. The Beattie government certainly makes no excuses for those high fines.

I thank all members, the opposition and the Liberal members in their absence for their support for the bill. I acknowledge my departmental officers—Dominic Tennison, Nicole Downing and Lana Bartholomew—for providing excellent support to my ministerial backbench committee and to me. I acknowledge Michael Caldwell and David Smith from my office.

**Mr Lucas** interjected.

**Ms KEECH:** Absolutely. I also thank the member for Mudgeeraba for her contribution. I thank her and all members.

Motion agreed to.