



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard Tuesday, 18 May 2004

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Alcohol Action Plan

Hon. P.D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.37 a.m.): Alcohol misuse is costly, destructive and sometimes fatal. The monetary cost to Queensland is estimated at \$1.4 billion per year and the human cost is astronomical. Between 1992 and 2001, more than 6,000 Queenslanders died of alcohol related causes and more than 136,000 were hospitalised. Thirty per cent of road deaths and almost 13 per cent of all traffic accidents involve alcohol, costing the community more than \$186 million in 2002-03.

Alcohol also had a presence in 38 per cent of domestic violence breaches, 43 per cent of assaults and 77 per cent of good order offences. *Finding the Balance*, the new Queensland Alcohol Action Plan 2003-04 to 2005-06 which cabinet has endorsed, outlines these and other facts. Alarming, the plan highlights how teenagers and young adults are adopting increasingly dangerous drinking habits. I table a copy of that report *Finding the Balance* for all members which I urge them to read.

Binge drinking is on the rise amongst young women, and the proportion of girls aged 14 to 17 with dangerous drinking habits has risen from one per cent in 1998 to nine per cent in 2001—that is, almost one in 10 teenage girls who are too young to legally enter a bar drink at dangerous levels. We know such risky behaviour can cause horrific road accidents, sexual coercion and unwanted pregnancies, foetal alcohol syndrome and drownings. One of the top priorities of this action plan is to pull these young women back from the precipice and prevent other girls from adopting risky habits.

To this end, Queensland Health is developing a campaign to counter binge drinking among young women, just as it has implemented a program warning young people of the risks of drink spiking.

The government has a range of integrated strategies to prevent and reduce alcohol-related harm, based on the best available evidence. The strategies include more than \$2 million on random breath tests each year—equivalent to one test for every licensed driver; a review of drink driving penalties and sanctions, including consideration of options to deter recidivist drink drivers; a review of the Liquor Act, including consideration of options to strengthen regulation of unacceptable hospitality practices; strategies to counter irresponsible marketing of liquor products to young people; the Rio Tinto Child Health Partnership focusing on the impact of indigenous alcohol consumption on prenatal health; and an introduction of alcohol restrictions in indigenous communities, based on tailor-made plans developed by community justice groups.

Statistically, the average Queenslanders alcohol consumption has in fact declined from 11 litres per adult in 1993 to 10 litres in 2001. Hopefully that trend will continue. This is encouraging and shows that awareness raising and enforcement do work. But we continue to drink more than our share and some trends are alarming.

This plan is the third in a trio of action plans under Beyond a Quick Fix, the Queensland drug strategic framework. The first, released in October 2000, was about tobacco and the second, published in November 2003, dealt with illicit drugs.

This plan may include strategies that some would consider anticompetitive. However, that is a criticism the government is prepared to wear when we are tackling alcohol misuse and striving to improve the health and safety of Queenslanders. I urge, as I said, all members to read it.