



Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR CHARTERS TOWERS

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TOBACCO AND OTHER SMOKING PRODUCTS AMENDMENT BILL

Mr KNUTH (Charters Towers—NPA) (3.21 p.m.): I rise to speak to the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Amendment Bill 2004. Under this bill, it is foreseen that the government will attempt to provide a healthier environment for all people. I recognise that smoking costs millions of dollars to the public health system and also recognise the effect that it has on the daily life of some people. It is commendable that the government is looking at the best interest of Queenslanders. However, I firmly believe it is not necessarily the right way to go about it. We cannot physically force a person to quit smoking, and it would be inhumane to force it upon someone by taking away their rights.

Smokers pay their taxes and contribute to society. It concerns me that we are becoming a police state in Queensland. I feel it is beyond comprehension that we will have environmental health officers targeting innocent, law-abiding citizens whose only crime is to smoke a cigarette. Only recently I was in a Clermont pub and was confronted by friends and locals who felt that they were being discriminated against and targeted for doing what they have always done, and that is to have a smoke in a traditional outback pub. This same pub that I am talking about is where the Clermont Rugby League Club came back to after winning their grand final. I was there for that occasion. They came back, they had their drinks, they had their durries and they thoroughly enjoyed themselves. After these laws come into existence, this will not be allowed.

I would also like to raise other issues. Hoteliers are asking the question: are they expected to enforce these regulations? Are barmaids going to throw out a six-foot bloke who decides to have a smoke with his drinks—a person who has done this for most of his life? Will publicans be left with the cost of the fine if this man is found smoking within the establishment? There are also concerns that local pub owners are required to have an outside area set aside especially for smokers. How does this fit with local by-laws? If council rejects extension applications for suitable smoking areas, does this mean that the pubs do not have any smokers, which will in turn jeopardise the future of their establishment?

I note, too, that the cost to the Queensland government will be met within the existing Queensland Health budget. What about the cost to the businesses and hotels around the state? It is anticipated that 2,500 jobs will be lost in the hotel business in the first three months. In some hotels in my electorate 90 per cent of the clientele are smokers and they have said that they will not go to pubs if they cannot smoke. These are the issues of concern that I wanted to raise before the House.