



Speech by

Liz Cunningham

MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE

Hansard Wednesday, 9 August 2006

PROSTITUTION AMENDMENT BILL

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (9.48 pm): I rise to oppose the Prostitution Amendment Bill 2006. I note the comments from the minister that the bill is a technical piece of legislation—it amends the technical aspects of the current legislation in this state. I will not repeat what the member for Maryborough said but I reinforce that he presented the real face of this industry. He was talking about real people and that this legislation, even though the bill may be technical or may be called technical, is about real people and the impacts of this type of activity.

The National Party speaker, the member for Gregory, made a number of very good points. He said that the opposition would be opposing the bill because of two sections. I will be opposing the bill because I oppose the principle of prostitution, which this bill espouses—that is, that prostitution is the most dehumanising and degrading abuse of women and young men that we have ever legislated for.

The legislation increases the number of prostitutes at a brothel from five to eight. It was always a concern when the first legislation for brothels was introduced in 1999 that it would be the thin end of the wedge—that it would see an increase in the availability of prostitutes and the availability of brothels; that over time the placement of brothels, the regulation of brothels, the checks and balances on those who are either forced or required because of their financial circumstances to work in brothels would be relaxed; and that the protection that was purported to be achieved by the prostitution legislation in 1999 would over time be lost and undermined. I oppose this legislation because I oppose the principles of prostitution.

The other matter I wish to raise is the involvement of local government. Initially local governments were going to have the opportunity to have a right of veto in the establishment of brothels in their local government areas. Once the legislation was passed and some time had transpired, it was clear that most local authorities would not support the establishment of a brothel when an application was made. The government then amended the legislation so that cities with a population of 20,000 and above lost that right of veto. Many of us, including the coalition and Independents, opposed the removal of the rights of local councils to have a say in the social fabric of their local authority area. After all, local councils receive a lot of firsthand messages from members of their community in terms of social standards and expectations, more so than perhaps the state government and certainly more so than the federal government.

I again put on the record my belief that local governments, in all areas, should have a right of expression and re-establish a right of veto in relation to the location of brothels in their local authority areas. That is not why I am opposing this legislation. I am opposing this legislation because I am opposed to prostitution, the demeaning and belittling of men and women who are caught up in this industry.

We have seen indications in the media in Australia that people are brought over from other countries and forced into prostitution. That can now occur in Queensland because we have a brothel industry. I am opposed to the legislation.