



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Safe Youth Parties Task Force

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (10.03 am): Like many Queenslanders, I am concerned about reports of parties involving young people which adversely impact on law-abiding Queenslanders and which lead to dangerous behaviours by young people that require a police response. Last year the police minister, Judy Spence, set up the Safe Youth Parties Task Force to look at ways in which to reduce the harmful effects of youth gatherings and parties. Since May 2005, this committee of seven members of parliament has consulted widely with police, youth, stakeholders and the community in putting together its report. The task force analysed police data during the period June to October last year from across the state—Brisbane, Cairns, the Gold and Sunshine coasts, Logan, Townsville, Rockhampton and Warwick.

I want to stress that the issues that can be associated with youth gatherings is not phenomena unique to Queensland. The task force found that the prevalence of out-of-control parties was less than expected. Police data used by the task force shows that fewer than two per cent of the total calls to the Police Service related to young people at either parties or gatherings. The task force also found that the main reason parties went out of control was the excessive consumption of alcohol.

Gatecrashing was a secondary issue. Police data used by the task force showed that 82 per cent of parties where police were required to attend did not involve gatecrashing. From a survey, two-thirds of respondents said that they had never gatecrashed a party or gone uninvited. Therefore, any proposal to change the law to address gatecrashing is not based on evidence and will not solve the problems. The problems lie in the supply of alcohol to minors and parental responsibility. These problems are at the heart of the issue.

The task force also surveyed 293 people aged between 15 and 24 and found that 69 per cent of parties held in public spaces were unsupervised; only 43 per cent of parties in private houses were supervised by parents or other adults; 55 per cent of respondents said that excessive alcohol consumption occurred at parties most or all of the time; and 53 per cent of respondents said that drug use was never or rarely occurring.

As a result, the task force has put together 14 recommendations. The government has accepted all 14 recommendations. The minister for police will table a report in her ministerial statement shortly. This is an issue of the need for parental responsibility. You cannot simply have unsupervised parties. Having had three teenage children who have now just gone into their 20s, I understand how difficult this issue is, but parental responsibility is something that has to be reinforced and encouraged when young people are having parties. Frankly, we have to do something about tackling the consumption of alcohol. Alcohol abuse is at the heart of this issue. We cannot simply talk about this problem without addressing the hard issue of alcohol abuse.

The government will expand move-on powers to provide police with the ability to move on individuals or groups of young people who have spilled into public areas. So the police will have the legal

sanction to move on these young people. The report highlights the issue of parental responsibility and increasing the awareness of parents about the activities of their children. The report reflects concerns about inadequate parental responsibility or the lack of parental responsibility surrounding youth parties; the number of parents supplying under-age children with alcohol—and that is a serious issue; the number of parents who showed little interest in their children when police notified them that their child was intoxicated—and, frankly, that is unforgivable; the fact that many parents are unaware of their child's social activities; and the failure of some parents to establish boundaries.

As the task force report points out on page 23, if a minor does not pay the fine for a liquor offence, it is unable to be enforced. It might result in no action being taken. That is hardly a desirable outcome. I am pleased to accept the recommendation that my government examine amending the Juvenile Justice Act 1992 to ensure that fines for liquor offences issued to people under 18 are enforceable, including having the parents or guardians of juveniles pay the fine. That makes people accountable. We will also implement the recommendation that police report any child protection concerns associated with parental neglect of children who are repeatedly drinking to the Department of Child Safety.

Another recommendation has been to expand and further promote the Queensland Police Service's safe parties initiative in which people register their party with their local police station. Recently, the Police Service has reviewed and further resourced this initiative. The government will now look at promoting it more widely with options such as radio advertising.

The report also recommends specific campaigns to target school based alcohol and drug abuse. As a result, we will review and enhance our existing public information and education strategies in relation to this. While there are already various school based alcohol and drug education and awareness programs, we will establish a cross-agency initiative to develop and implement a coordinated communication campaign that will target both parents and young people.

I want to thank the seven members of parliament who made up this committee—the chair and member for Mount Ommaney, the member for Broadwater, the member for Redlands, the member for Keppel, the member for Glass House, the member for Burleigh and the member for Springwood and, of course, I also thank the police minister for commissioning this committee.

This is groundbreaking research in an area where there was not previously any research available. I believe that this report will inform the public debate, and I encourage those who would put forward shallow, quick-fix policy solutions to what clearly are complicated issues to have a thorough read.

My government is committed to implementing the recommendations and doing all we can to ensure that young Queenslanders are safe and that their activities do not have adverse impacts on the quality of life of others.