



Speech by

**Barbara Stone**

**MEMBER FOR SPRINGWOOD**

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## **LIQUOR (RESTRICTION OF SUPPLY TO MINORS) AMENDMENT BILL**

**Ms STONE** (Springwood—ALP) (8.24 pm): I rise to speak on and oppose the Liquor (Restrictions of Supply to Minors) Amendment Bill 2007. I start by stating the objectives that the bill proposes to achieve, which is to amend the Liquor Act 1992 to restrict the potential supply of alcohol to minors in private places such as holiday apartments. While all of us in this House can understand and support the sentiment of that statement, the fact remains that neither is the bill practical nor is it the answer to the problem that it is trying to address. It is not just me that believes that this is not a practical solution needed to curb under-age binge drinking.

I took the bill to the Liquor Industry Action Group Logan Corridor and asked for the members to give me their views on it. The Liquor Industry Action Group Logan Corridor consists of pubs and clubs managers and staff, security providers, officers from Logan City Council and Relationships Australia, liquor licensing officers and my parliamentary colleagues the member for Waterford and the member for Woodridge. Also, a large contingent of police officers that represent various locations throughout Logan and a variety of branches within the Queensland service also attend those meetings.

The feedback I received was that the bill would be impractical. I will read one of the comments. It states—

I've read the amendment bill regarding minors. There is no way in a pink fit this could be passed. It's impossible to manage.

Those words reflected the majority of comment made to me when I asked for feedback on the bill.

However, everyone does agree that under-age binge drinking is a problem throughout the country. Firstly, I think it is important to put into context the problem that this bill deals with. The liquor licensing web site states that young people are being recognised nationally as the group most at risk for alcohol misuse, with 42 per cent of males and 39 per cent of females aged 18 to 24 years drinking at risky levels, and 14 per cent of males and 10 per cent of females aged 14 to 17 years drinking at high-risk levels, with a further 27 per cent of males and 34 per cent of females in that age group drinking at risky levels. Some of the impacts of risky drinking on young people include road injuries, water related deaths and injuries, domestic violence and abuse, sexual coercion and violence.

What is Queensland actually doing to combat this problem? The Queensland Alcohol Action Plan is one step that the Queensland government has implemented to tackle alcohol misuse in minors. The Queensland government is committed to continued education and information based campaigns that target transitional development periods when young people are more vulnerable to high-risk alcohol use, such as the 12- to 14-year-old and the 17- to 18-year-old age groups.

As such, a priority under the Queensland Alcohol Action Plan is the development and implementation of programs that enhance protective factors and reduce risk factors in young people to prevent alcohol misuse and reduce alcohol related harm through both general and targeted strategies. What are some of those strategies?

We can look at the GENERATE youth web site, which is an online mechanism that has information, connection and discussions between young people and government, including alcohol and drug issues.

We have the Queensland School Drug Education strategies and school based youth health nurses program.

**An opposition member:** It doesn't work, though.

**Ms STONE:** There is the Croc Festival, which encourages young Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians from rural and remote communities to take control of their lives, to focus on positive future goals and make healthy choices through a three-day festival that embraces health, careers, culture, education, sports, visual and performing arts. Young people, their communities, governments and non-government agencies are involved in the development and production of the festival.

I heard a member of the opposition say that the school based nurses program is not working. Obviously, that member has never been out to the schools to see those school based nurses. I have gone to my high schools and sat down with the school based nurses. I have gone into the classrooms with them and seen the programs that they are running. They are doing a wonderful job in our schools. I congratulate the school based nurses. Unlike the opposition, I appreciate what they are doing.

I attend the activities at the high schools in my area and something that I am passionate about is our schoolies week education strategy. Every year I go to the schools as a representative of the Liquor Industry Action Group, usually in partnership with the police. Sometimes we ask the local publican to speak at those classroom activities. He or she actually explains to the students what their responsibilities are as publicans to ensure that they do not have under-age drinkers on hand. They tell the students about the penalties that they receive if they do not comply. The students then get another perspective on this issue. The police and I talk about the Liquor Act, but we also bring up some of the most stupid incidents that occur at schoolies and most of them are usually alcohol related. We talk of how some of those people now have criminal records and how much that has ruined their future. So we are able to speak with those grade 12 students about a range of issues.

One thing that the Liquor Industry Action Group wants to do more of—and we have done this in the past—is to speak to grade 12 students in the beginning of the year about the liquor laws, because we feel that waiting for schoolies is a bit too late. We would rather use schoolies to go back and reinforce the message that they would have already been given in the beginning of the year. What I really like about this classroom activity with schoolies at the end of the year is not just giving these talks but also hearing their views on issues that are important to them—an issue such as this, for example. Hearing their views is so informative, especially in a debate like this one.

The bill seems to have an emphasis on parents. While no-one would deny that more parental responsibility on issues such as under-age binge drinking would be a good thing and is warranted, it does not really emphasise that it is not just parents who are supplying alcohol to minors. When we speak to young people they will tell you that older friends and older brothers and sisters are getting alcohol for them. This also came out in the Safe Youth Parties Task Force. During the Safe Youth Parties Task Force I held a small forum with a number of students from high schools in my area.

**Mr Gibson** interjected.

**Ms STONE:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I can barely hear myself giving this speech and I am getting most unparliamentary language from this side of the House.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order!

**Ms STONE:** Okay, now we have some manners back. During the Safe Youth Parties Task Force I held a small forum with a number of students from high schools in my area. I must admit that some of them had some very interesting ideas. One group would like to see a wine appreciation class. They believe that, while we are a nation with a beer-swilling, heavy-drinking culture, perhaps it is time to refine this and teach about the finer points of wine. They were very keen to talk about France and its views on wine.

The other point they made was that they were often introduced to alcohol at home with a glass of champagne for a birthday toast. While some of them were given alcohol on special occasions at home during their teens, they believed it assisted them to learn more about the refined side of enjoying alcohol and that it went a long way towards their knowledge and their education on responsible drinking. I had this experience as a child, and I must say that responsible drinking was certainly impressed on me. It was also a bit of a novelty as a teenager to have a sip of champagne like the adults and toast the birthday person. But it also meant at 18 that it was not a novelty to go to a pub and try all the drinks, because I had already had that experience with alcohol—and probably because my mum and nanna worked in the hotel industry I had very good experience with some of the drinks. I think we should acknowledge that parents can educate their kids about responsible drinking in their homes in a sensible and safe manner.

The state government is also looking at this issue as part of the review of the Liquor Act. It is important that the act is balanced with regard to the liquor industry and the welfare, needs and interests of the industry. We have liquor trading conditions that are monitored. I know that the Tactical Crime Squad in

the Logan area does targeted operations in local pubs and clubs. I have had parents complain to me about their kids being fined. There is really nothing to say about that. Their kids should not have been there.

I also have a very nice story to tell. I had a parent tell me about their son who was fined for sitting in the park having a stubbie. A police car came from a bush track, appeared from nowhere and the kids were fined for having a stubbie in the park. I rang and congratulated the police officer. I said, 'Thank you very much. Can we do more?' So we are enforcing our laws on under-age drinking.

The other thing I would like to say is that the major difference—and I am talking about some fun remarks regarding our drinking at home—is that we did not have the violence and the parties that we see these days. That is the difference. I want to acknowledge Senior Constable Grant Sampson from Loganholme Police Station who was seriously injured in a gutless and cowardly assault from a person gatecrashing a party. I know all Queenslanders are thinking of him during his recovery and wish him a full and speedy recovery.

It is this type of incident that goes to the heart of this bill. That is why I do not believe this bill is the answer. I have called on the Premier, the Minister for Health, the Minister for Communities and minister for youth, and the minister for fair trading to implement a campaign that says no to violence—not no to domestic violence but no to violence full stop. That is why I cannot support this bill.