



Speech by

Hon. Margaret Keech

MEMBER FOR ALBERT

Hansard Wednesday, 5 September 2007

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Liquor Licensing Ministerial Forum

Hon. MM KEECH (Albert—ALP) (Minister for Tourism, Fair Trading, Wine Industry Development and Women) (10.16 am): Last week, together with my parliamentary secretary, the member for Whitsunday, I attended the annual Ministerial Conference on the Status of Women in Hobart. This important forum is an opportunity for ministers from the states, territories and New Zealand to meet with the federal minister and discuss issues of importance affecting women. Talks were dominated by the devastating effect on women of the Howard government's WorkChoices legislation. I presented strong empirical evidence that under WorkChoices women are the biggest losers. It was disappointing, therefore, that the federal minister for women, Julie Bishop, failed to attend the conference to respond to the concerns raised by state and territory ministers.

The council also had an opportunity to meet Indigenous women who had travelled from throughout Australia and had come to the council to present a very important report on issues affecting their communities. Again, it was disappointing that the federal minister, Julie Bishop, was not available to hear from these Indigenous women the significant increase in domestic violence in their communities since the Howard government got rid of the CDP work programs.

I raised with my colleagues an emerging problem we are already tackling here in Queensland—that is, the disturbing increase in the number of young women drinking alcohol at unsafe levels. This problem requires national action, which is why I will be inviting state, territory and federal liquor licensing ministers to a forum in Queensland later this year. I think it is vital that liquor licensing ministers, who do not currently have such a forum, share their knowledge and resources to help change Australia's longstanding drinking culture that is killing our young people.

The move received strong support from ministers for women, who agreed to raise the matter with liquor licensing ministers in their own jurisdictions. Ministers for women have an important role to play in implementing strategies to battle binge drinking but we need to work closely with other agencies to achieve the best possible results.

Queensland Health, the Department of Communities and the Liquor Licensing Division work together to create effective education and advertising campaigns on the dangers of binge drinking. We have run a number of highly successful campaigns, including Queensland Health's 'Make up your own mind about drinking' series of ads, a copy of which I presented to other ministers at the conference. Recent evaluations of this campaign have shown strong recall rates among young women and the message was considered empowering rather than preaching. This approach could go a long way to changing the worrying drinking culture that we are seeing develop among young Australian women. The Beattie government is committed to improving the lives of young women. I look forward to reporting back to parliament on the outcomes of the inaugural liquor licensing ministers forum.