



Speech by

Phil Weightman

MEMBER FOR CLEVELAND

Hansard Tuesday, 7 August 2007

LIQUOR (RESTRICTION OF SUPPLY TO MINORS) AMENDMENT BILL

Mr WEIGHTMAN (Cleveland—ALP) (8.42 pm): I rise to speak to the Liquor (Restriction of Supply to Minors) Amendment Bill 2007. The proposed amendments proffered by the member for Surfers Paradise are aimed at controlling the very real and complex social problem of youth drinking. The unfortunate reality is that the bill does not address the real issues. What it does do is create a logistical nightmare with regard to the policing of some sections of the bill. As I have previously said, under-age drinking and the subsequent associated violence and unsociable behaviour is a complex social issue requiring a variety of layered strategies to deal with it. I am not convinced that this bill does this.

The Beattie government has taken giant strides in addressing binge drinking, in particular amongst young people in Queensland. We have a Brisbane City Safety Action Plan and a Statewide Safety Action Plan which is about protecting Queenslanders. We have banned drinking competitions on licensed premises. It is a serious breach of the Liquor Act to promote the rapid and dangerous consumption of alcohol by patrons. We have formed a liquor flying squad for quick deployment across the state. Police and Liquor Licensing have dramatically ramped up compliance blitzes across Queensland and they are having some results.

Sometimes we have to protect people from themselves. Sometimes we have to quell youthful exuberance that can lead to trouble because of the misuse of alcohol. As other members have said, we need to change the Aussie drinking culture. I am not saying for a moment that people should not drink, but they do need to start taking responsibility for their own actions. The responsibility of getting the message across starts with us, the parents. Many of us have provided alcohol to our children and it may be to ease them into drinking. After all, drinking in a controlled environment in a controlled way should be acceptable. Unfortunately, too often we slip into uncontrolled areas and that is where the problems arise.

There are already stiff penalties for breaches of the Liquor Act for licensees and anybody else. A licensee can lose his or her licence for supplying alcohol to minors on premises. They can be fined up to \$18,750 per offence for supplying alcohol on licensed premises. People other than licensees can be fined up to \$3,000 for supplying alcohol to minors on premises or for consumption in public places. It is more likely that they will receive a \$600 on-the-spot fine though. Minors are likely to cop a \$225 on-the-spot fine for drinking on licensed premises or in public places. There is no offence for drinking in private residences and at this time I think that should remain so. We do not need to adopt such a Big Brother approach. This is not a granny state. The government should not be telling parents whether they can give their kids a drink, when and where. It is not our role. But it is the role of parents, as I said, to accept their responsibility as parents and to teach their kids responsibility when it comes to consuming alcohol. Parents have a responsibility and the young people need to accept responsibility for their own actions. After all, their life may depend on it.

The death of Matthew Stanley nearly 12 months ago did have an alcohol component, but it was not the sole factor. Youth drinking is a cultural problem and requires a cultural shift. In my humble opinion, this legislation does not do that and therefore, based on that, I cannot support this bill.