



Speech by

Ms Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard Wednesday, 10 September 2008

LIQUOR AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

Ms GRACE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (12.55 pm): I rise in support of the Liquor and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2008. In doing so, I note that as the member for Brisbane Central I will have many businesses and patrons impacted by these changes. My electorate of Brisbane Central, in particular, is effectively the heart of Brisbane's vibrant and exciting night-life, having both the CBD and the Valley areas located in it. Therefore, I have a keen interest in this bill and I welcome laws that are all about ensuring alcohol consumption is undertaken in a responsible manner and that having fun out at night does not impose unreasonable financial and social costs on both industry and our community.

This bill still enables people to have a good time and a great night out in the world-class facilities that are located in my electorate and others, but it includes the government's announced package of harm minimisation initiatives with regard to liquor that will significantly impact on licensed premises across Queensland. Minimising harm from the misuse and abuse of alcohol remains a high priority of the Bligh government. I welcome this bill, which addresses the crucial issue of harm minimisation and within that I believe binge drinking.

This bill leads the way with the most significant alcohol reform program in Australia, with current liquor reforms that reflect our rapidly changing state. I welcome and note that harm minimisation is the primary object of the Liquor Act for, as we all know, when alcohol is consumed irresponsibly the financial and social costs on both industry and the community can be high.

For some years the government has been actively working to reduce alcohol abuse via a range of strategies such as the Queensland Alcohol Action Plan and the Brisbane City Safety Action Plan. These plans have seen the implementation of a number of alcohol management initiatives such as the 3 am lockout, which I witnessed firsthand when I did a tour around the Valley nightclubs recently, statewide advertising bans, which the industry tells me have worked fantastically, and tougher licence conditions. By continuing to build on these strategies, the current liquor reforms will be in step with a growing and modern state of Queensland. At the same time they will tackle the primary concern of the broader community regarding harm minimisation.

Most new applicants for liquor licences and licensees applying to make changes to existing liquor licences will be required to make an assessment of the risks posed by the operation of the licence and lodge a risk assessed management plan, demonstrating how they will minimise any risks identified from their operation. All new applicants for liquor licences will also be required to lodge a community impact statement which will highlight any impacts on the surrounding locality and how these impacts will be mitigated. I believe these are the most important aspects of the bill. As the inner city becomes more popular, it is essential that all the interests are respected when it comes to granting new liquor licences. Further, the bill before the House legislates proactive strategies to minimise harm from the sale and supply of alcohol. Proactive strategies include a ministerial banning power of undesirable liquor products, irresponsible supply provisions where liquor may be seized from minors and young people, mandatory training for all paid staff selling or supplying liquor on licensed premises and the legislative recognition of local liquor accords.

On the issue of the local liquor accords, I am extremely pleased to report that one of most successful accords in the state is the Valley Liquor Accord, developed by a number of Fortitude Valley licensees, chaired by Mr Les Pullos. This accord is all about being part of a safe venue program embracing the main object of the bill, harm minimisation. I congratulate them on this initiative.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 pm to 2.30 pm.

Ms GRACE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (2.31 pm): This is clear evidence that already the main elements of this bill are being used practically by industry that acknowledge that good regulation based on safe harm minimisation policies are also good for business, their patrons and the community. The prioritisation of harm minimisation as the first objective reflects the community's attitude to the sale and supply of liquor and builds on developments in national and international jurisdictions.

The bill's remaining objectives are also most welcome. I would like to go through half a dozen of those very quickly. Firstly, the expanded definition of 'liquor' ensures that products which target young people and encourage the rapid consumption of alcohol are able to be captured. Secondly, there are new powers to issue guidelines to assist in the interpretation and application of the act and liquor regulations. Thirdly, the creation of an irresponsible supply provision makes it an offence for an adult to supply alcohol to a minor in private places. This issue has attracted significant attention in the community, particularly in the context of youth parties and schoolies celebrations. It will be addressed through this provision. I do not think that anyone in the community can argue against the ability for the law to do something about clear breaches of this provision.

Fourthly, I welcome mandatory training requirements for the responsible service of alcohol and the responsible management of a licensed venue. I believe increased professionalism aimed at harm minimisation throughout the industry can only be achieved with properly trained staff completing government-endorsed training. This is a most welcome aspect of the bill. Fifthly, there are new powers to order emergency closure or licence suspension where riotous behaviour is occurring or is likely to occur. Sixthly, I welcome the introduction of annual liquor licence fees based on the risk a licensed premises poses such as from its trading hours and compliance history.

The government has undertaken extensive consultation with the industry and the community since the introduction of the Brisbane City Safety Action Plan in March 2005. Comments from the public and industry in response to this review have guided the government in developing the resulting liquor reforms. In fact, over 8,400 submissions were received from the public in response to the government's draft regulatory impact statement on the public benefit test that was released in February this year. I also want to place on record my thanks to the Treasurer who met a delegation from the Fortitude Valley area to discuss the draft regulatory impact statement.

The reforms also address the outcomes and recommendations of the various youth violence task force committees as well as the Queensland and national drug strategies. This bill together with its reforms will encourage the responsible supply and the responsible consumption of alcohol with harm minimisation as its primary objective. At the same time, it will ensure that the industry can continue to develop and innovate. I think these laws are a great step in the right direction and I commend the bill to the House.