



Speech by

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LIQUOR AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

Mr KNUTH (Charters Towers—NPA) (12.28 pm): The Liquor and Other Acts Amendment Bill is supposed to be designed to further strengthen the controls authorities have to address binge drinking with the respectable outcome of minimising harm. I have concerns, however—some of which the minister addressed in the liquor reforms outcome. But I am still concerned about the impact on the viability of small clubs and the good work they do in our rural and remote communities.

Firstly, I am very pleased to see that the voluntary nature of bar workers in non-profit organisations and the excessive burden that mandatory training would have placed on each individual and on charities has been acknowledged by the minister, but it still goes too far, especially the provision of having one trained RSA volunteer on site at all times. It must be remembered that charities serve the community out of the goodness of their hearts and do not need to be bound by red tape, courses and costs. There are already significant regulations in place that non-profit organisations have to deal with, and any additional regulations will only add to the scarcity of willing volunteers to become executive members on committees. There is also concern that there will be little to no access to RSA training providers in these rural areas and that they will be forced to travel 600-kilometre round trips to complete the course.

Many communities in my electorate are mining communities, with a high percentage of the workforce working shift hours. The proposed standard trading hours would have had a devastating effect in these communities. For example, the Moranbah Workers Club caters for shiftworkers. It is a community based club that makes financial donations to many other community groups. In 2007, the club provided close to \$80,000 in support to over 50 organisations throughout Moranbah. Approximately 25 per cent to 35 per cent of its daily total trade is earned between the hours of 7 am and 10 am. During these hours, night shift workers come off shift and have the option of breakfast with a drink. It is no different from someone finishing work at 5 pm and calling in to the local club to have a few drinks with dinner.

In all the research, social problems associated with alcohol consumption occur between the later hours of 2 am and 5 am. Yet it was the 7 am to 10 am timeslot that was being targeted. This was illogical and would have had repercussions for smaller community based clubs such as the Moranbah Workers Club. The adjustment to allow trading for clubs where there is a demonstrated need in the community such as Moranbah is a small relief. However, it is still to be seen whether these changes will provide a workable solution.

Golf clubs have also expressed grave concerns with this legislation. Many golf championships begin early in the morning with food and drink available for sale to participants. Golf clubs and social clubs are not like casinos and nightclubs and it is unfair for them to be considered in the same category as these high-risk nightclubs. I consider it very serious that the cost and red tape involved in applying for one-off permits for champagne breakfasts, which are very popular with golf clubs, will make these events obsolete.

The original proposal was a blanket approach to reducing licensing hours across all licensed venues. That failed to recognise that many clubs service specific needs during these hours. Clubs are concerned that the licensing restructure will incur extra expense for their particular circumstances.

Considering the additional expenditure to ensure that they have an RSA trained volunteer and recurrent costs, this could effectively end the viability of smaller clubs. Patrons of rural and remote clubs and hotels are being tarred by the same brush as Brisbane nightclubs, which have a 3 am lockout and are constantly battling the scourge of violence as a result of excessive alcohol and drug use. This is unfair and will have dire consequences for the viability of licensed premises in rural areas.

Many local clubs—sporting, racing and service clubs—donate the funds raised from the bars and events to organisations that service their areas, such as the Royal Flying Doctor Service, the CQ Rescue helicopter, local schools and hospitals. As a member of the Lions Club, I worked behind the bar during the country amateur races and there were over 3,000 people in attendance. We are all supported by the Lions Club. We raise funds. The last time I worked behind the bar those funds went towards disabled access at the swimming pool. Most members of the Lions Club do not understand this RSA provision. They just do it out of the goodness of their hearts to support their local communities and charities.

This legislation, despite the changes that have been made to reflect the complexity that would have been imposed, will still prevent many organisations from running events that involve alcohol and therefore they will not be able to support and contribute to the charities that have benefited from that support in the past. It is important to recognise that some clubs or pubs that run orderly and well-organised events or establishments will be unfairly hurt by this legislation. The legislation needs to recognise the uniqueness of rural communities and the people who choose to live and work there.