



Speech by

Jarrod Bleijie

MEMBER FOR KAWANA

Hansard Tuesday, 26 October 2010

POLICE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr BLEIJIE (Kawana—LNP) (3.24 pm): This afternoon I rise to contribute to the Police Legislation Amendment Bill currently before the House. The bill amends the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000, the Police Service Administration Act 1990 and the Prostitution Act 1999. I concur with the sentiments and statements expressed by the shadow minister, the member for Gregory, in his speech this afternoon.

One element of the legislative amendment before the House relates to the policy of dealing with nuisance offences. Under Labor—and everyone in the House would agree with me—Queensland police have become bogged down having to deal with public nuisance offences, which takes valuable time away from more prominent cases and, effectively, clogs up our court systems. Between 2005 and 2008, public nuisance offences increased by almost 40 per cent. As the former minister for police, in 2008 the member for Sunnybank stated that police data shows that alcohol is the single highest causal factor for public nuisance offences and is involved in three-quarters of all cases. As I have stated in this place on many occasions, clearly the state Labor government of the past 12 years has totally lost control of our streets, particularly at night when alcohol is reported as the main cause of public nuisance. The rapid increase in the rate of public nuisance offences since the offence was created in 2003 is an indictment on Labor's softly-softly approach to the general justice system of Queensland.

For every crime there needs to be a penalty that is an adequate deterrent for one not to commit the crime in the first instance. I believe that an on-the-spot fine for someone who is causing a public nuisance sends a stronger message than simply issuing a ticket with a court date some weeks down the track. If someone is being a public nuisance, the police will have the discretion of issuing on-the-spot fines, which should put a dampener on a big night out on the town. Every resident in Queensland should be able to go out in the evening, or at any time of the day, and enjoy our great lifestyle with moderation, respect for others and respect for property. The trial that the government initiated last year in South Brisbane and Townsville provided for on-the-spot fines between \$100 and \$150 to be allocated to those committing acts of public nuisance.

A Crime and Misconduct Commission report, released in May 2008, recommended a major overhaul of public nuisance policing. The CMC report noted that the average fine that was issued by a Magistrates Court for a public nuisance offence was \$100. The issuing of on-the-spot tickets should significantly decrease the caseload in our court system. However, we are yet to see what the impact will be of this new system on the problem of nonpayers. The CMC report also indicated that 60 per cent of the summary offences dealt with by the Magistrates Court were public nuisance offenders and that 97 per cent of those defendants pleaded guilty or were found guilty after they had to appear in court. The Griffith University was commissioned to provide a report on the 12-month trial period for on-the-spot fines for public nuisances. The Griffith report indicated that such tickets were a cost-effective means of dealing with public nuisance offences and led to improved workload efficiencies for the current court system and the Police Service.

Interestingly, consultation for this amendment was limited only to government agencies and it appears that no consultation was undertaken with broader stakeholder organisations such as the Law Society. However, I note that this morning in parliament a letter from a barrister from the Queensland

University of Technology was tabled with one of the reports. I have great respect for the work that is undertaken by the men and women who serve as Queensland police officers and I dispute the claims made by the Queensland Council for Civil Liberties President, Michael Cope, who said—

This will become the thing police just slap on someone whenever they aren't happy.

He further stated—

No one will fight them and ultimately people who are homeless or young will bear the brunt of this.

On many occasions in this place in relation to issues of justice in Queensland I have said that I am sick and tired of people, including the civil liberty champions, using youth and other factors as an excuse to get away with certain deplorable acts that, as a society, we should not accept. People do have rights and people do have choices, but with those rights and choices comes responsibility. I say to all these loopy, leftie civil libertarian campaigners—and generally they are mostly those opposite—that you cannot contract out of your responsibilities in society.

The Law, Justice and Safety Committee toured the state during its alcohol related violence inquiry. We toured the nightclubs at three in the morning. We toured the streets, as those members of the committee have indicated in this place before, and what we saw was appalling.

Ms Grace: Was not.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection from the member for Brisbane Central and note that the member for Brisbane Central is not on the Law, Justice and Safety Committee. So for her to be commenting on what we saw is probably a little out of place.

Ms Grace: I live there; you don't.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take that interjection. I point out to the member for Brisbane Central, as she crossfires walking across the chamber, that it was the Law, Justice and Safety Committee that was charged by this parliament with conducting the alcohol related violence inquiry and, as part of that inquiry, we did tour the state and we did go out at 2 am, 3 am, 4 am and 5 am in places such as Rockhampton, Townsville, Cairns, the Sunshine Coast, the Brisbane CBD and Surfers Paradise. What we saw on the streets, as I said before, was absolutely appalling. Who are the ones who have to put up with all of this? It is the Queensland Police Service predominantly and the volunteers that we have on our streets. As I said, the loopy, leftie civil libertarians would not have a clue what happens on our streets at that time of the morning.

Mr Watt interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: They can issue press releases. They can say all they want. They can say that these people have all of these rights. What I would point out is that it comes back to personal responsibility. I do not accept the view taken by many opposite in this House that, because people are young and because of other varying factors, that gives them some form of excuse for getting away with what they are doing at that time of the morning. Ultimately, the amount of alcohol or drugs that one consumes is a choice for that individual. If that individual then goes down a path of what we see as becoming a public nuisance, then they should bear the responsibility. Throughout the last five minutes there have been many interjections from those opposite, particularly the member for Everton. I take those interjections. I note he will probably jump to his feet in a minute. I take the interjections as a sign that he of course does agree that because they are drunk or on drugs they have an excuse to get away with what they are doing.

Mr Watt: Yes, that's exactly what I believe, isn't it?

Mr BLEIJIE: Yes. That is exactly what he believes, and I note he did not take a point of order, so I will take it that what I said was factual.

Mr Dick: You wouldn't want to verbal anyone.

Mr BLEIJIE: Let me take the interjection of the Attorney-General. Let me remind the Attorney-General that, if anyone in this place should know what it is like to verbal someone, then I certainly would think it is the Attorney-General.

Mr DICK: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. That is a very disgraceful reflection on me. There is no substance to the allegation. I take personal offence. I ask the honourable member in his state of agitation to withdraw.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms O'Neill): Order! I ask the member for Kawana to withdraw his comments.

Mr BLEIJIE: I withdraw. I say to all of those civil libertarians—and they have certainly come out of the closet in the last 10 minutes—that they should go out at that time of the morning and see what is really happening on the streets because, for once in their life, they might stand up and fight for the rights and liberties of our fine policemen and policewomen who have to put up with this garbage happening that as a society we should be standing against. They put up with it every single day and night. I give more credit to the Queensland Police Service, who will no doubt recognise the appropriate discretionary obligations that they will have under these new arrangements.

The bill before the House also amends the Police Service Administration Act 1999 to enable the electronic assessment of criminal history records for employment screening purposes. The use of the electronic records provided to CrimTrac under the National Police Reference System will create a more efficient system of employment screening when seeking information on criminal history. There are still appropriate mechanisms in place to protect the release of information to a third party which could only be undertaken with the written consent of the person.

The other objective of the bill before the House deals with the regulatory provisions with respect to brothel licence obligations. The amendment to the Prostitution Act 1999 allows for the automatic 28-day suspension of a licence or an approved manager's certificate on the nonpayment of their annual fees. Relevant provisions are made with respect to fee payment plans and any outstanding fees between the party or individual involved and the Prostitution Licensing Authority. The bill also includes amendments which provide relevant disciplinary proceedings undertaken by the Prostitution Licensing Authority. These measures are draconian but necessary to maintain a properly regulated industry that is conducted in an appropriate manner.

I will conclude by thanking the fine officers of the Caloundra, Kawana Waters and Sippy Downs police stations and the Kawana Waters Police Beat at Kawana Shoppingworld which conduct the majority of police work that is undertaken in the Kawana electorate. The men and women of these stations are a testament to the Queensland Police Service. I wish to place on the public record the outstanding way in which they conduct themselves in the Kawana community. With that, I once again endorse the comments made by the shadow minister in his speech on the second reading.