




Speech By  
**Hon. Jarrod Bleijie**

**MEMBER FOR KAWANA**

---

Record of Proceedings, 2 April 2014

**CLASSIFICATION OF PUBLICATIONS (BILLBOARD ADVERTISING) AND  
OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Hon. JP BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (7.38 pm): The Classification of Publications (Billboard Advertising) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2013 is not supported by the government. The bill proposes that geographical zones be established which will be classified as G, PG, M or MA15+, with zone classification based on the frequency with which children and families access the area. I note that that the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee, in tabling its report on the bill on 25 November 2013, recommended that the bill not be passed.

The committee identified that, based on the zones proposed, it would be almost impossible for zones other than G classification zones to be established due to the proximity of locations to schools and other areas 'frequented by children and families'. The Queensland government agrees with the committee's position on this. Despite the unlikely event that a zone would be classified anything other than G-rated under this scheme, it is likely that children will be subjected to billboards in all of the proposed classification zones. Even if children do not access a particular area on a frequent basis, they may still attend the area or drive through an area—for example, on their way to school. It is clear from this bill that the concept of geographical classification zones has been poorly considered, with no thought as to the practical implementation of such a scheme. What would you expect from the Katter's Australian Party research division?

The Queensland government is generally of the view that the proposed scheme is unworkable and will not achieve its policy objective. Under the bill, if the Director-General of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General receives a complaint about a billboard being placed in an inappropriate geographical zone, an inspector can remove the billboard advertisement if the inspector may lawfully enter the place where the billboard is placed. The problem with this approach is that billboards are often on private property and so the inspector would have no power to remove the billboards anyway.

The state billboard geographical classification zoning panel and branch proposed by the bill would require significant government resources. To fund the panel and branch, the bill introduces a monthly levy on billboard owners of 10 per cent of the net revenue for billboards advertising for billboards with M or MA15+ content. This funding scheme is unworkable as most outdoor advertising would likely fall into the proposed categories of G or PG. So it is possible that the majority, if not all billboards, would not meet the threshold for payment of the levy. No money would ever be collected, so this would result in the full burden of the cost of the board and panel to fall on the Queensland government, or more particularly the Queensland taxpayer.

Overall, the proposed system establishes a lengthy administrative process and, given the volume of billboards across Queensland, it is likely to have a negative impact on businesses. The application process will increase red tape and create a significant burden on businesses in both Queensland and other jurisdictions. It is also likely that this framework would reduce the viability for businesses to use billboards as an advertising option.

This government is committed to ensuring Queensland is the safest place to raise a family. That is why, in response to community concerns about inappropriate and sexually explicit outdoor advertising, this government took action and referred the issue of outdoor advertising to the Health and Community Services Committee on 17 April 2013, well prior to the member for Dalrymple's opportunistic political bill here tonight. This committee considered whether the outdoor and billboard advertising industry in Queensland should be reformed, including whether legislative reform is needed to protect children from being exposed to sexually explicit and inappropriate advertising.

On 31 January 2014, the committee tabled a comprehensive report on sexually explicit advertising. The committee's report makes a number of recommendations, including that the government introduce legislation to establish a co-regulatory approach to outdoor advertising with a recognised industry body to develop a code of ethics for outdoor advertising that is given effect by regulation. An industry adjudication board would also be established to determine whether outdoor advertisements breach the code of ethics, with noncompliance with board determinations to result in the matter being referred to the Department of Justice and Attorney-General to consider enforcement and penalties. The Queensland government is carefully considering the committee's recommendations to decide the way forward for outdoor advertising in Queensland.

What we will do is consult with Queenslanders. This government was very proud to have set up a committee inquiry to look at this issue, well prior to the member's bill being introduced in this House. We held a press conference at Parliament House with some ladies who, of course, supported the government's intention to look at this in a proper way, to talk to the experts and the billboard owners with respect to the fact that we do not want to see billboards that display the objectification of women. We will attend to that, as we have, in a thoughtful process. We set up a committee inquiry. I think that was a great outcome in terms of the committee's ability to look at the issues. The committee has made some recommendations. There are some controversial recommendations which the billboard companies have been on to me about, but what I have said to the billboard companies is that we will take our time. We are looking at the committee's recommendations and then the government will respond accordingly in the time allocated to us to respond to the committee report.

What I will do is work with the billboard advertising owners because I believe they genuinely want to work with the government and to cooperate with the government to ensure that the objectification of women and children is not displayed on these particular types of billboards. I look forward very much to working with those advertisers and owners of the billboards and the stakeholders and all the relevant people so that we can come up with a program that actually will work and will lead to the non-objectification of women in Queensland. We oppose the bill.