




Speech By
Ray Stevens

MEMBER FOR MERMAID BEACH

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SAFE NIGHT OUT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (8.08 pm): It is my great pleasure to rise to speak in support of the Safe Night Out Legislation Amendment Bill 2014, which is a great step forward. It is appropriate legislation which attempts to tackle the alcohol fuelled violence on our streets. It is a clear direction for keeping our streets safe so that all of the community can experience our vibrant night-life.

This legislation is not a panacea in terms of incidents that may occur in the future. There is an element of our society who are complete idiots, and no amount of education about taking responsibility or direction will change their mentality. But what we are putting in place through this legislation is a reasonable, carefully considered and well-thought-out strategy to help protect people who enjoy the later night lifestyle from the idiots who are out there trying to ruin very enjoyable nights out.

Mr Bleijie: In Mermaid Beach or Broadwater?

Mr STEVENS: I am the former member for Broadbeach, which has been taken over very capably by the member for Surfers Paradise, who does a wonderful job looking after that area now. My electorate borders Broadbeach. As a former mayor of the Gold Coast I can say that these strategies have been ongoing for a long time in terms of hours of operation. I am also a former member of the legal affairs committee that deliberated long and hard and made 40 or 50 recommendations to the previous Labor government. They accepted about 10 easy ones, including a moratorium, and ignored the recommendations of that bipartisan committee in terms of hours of operation. Blaming problems on the hours of operation is the easy option. As the previous speaker, the member for Morayfield, just mentioned, a lot of these unfortunate incidents in society—the coward punches and the bad behaviour—occur before one o'clock in the morning. People are loaded up and are out to do damage and they create havoc. The behaviour of a very small percentage is ruining it for the vast majority—probably 99 per cent—of the people out at night.

This legislation has three elements that I think are critical to delivering a much better outcome for our late-night revellers, to protecting people's safety and to ensuring the community is not affected by bad behaviour. The first important element is education. We are telling everyone what they should be doing, what they cannot do and what may be the effect of certain bad behaviour. We are telling people upfront that if they misbehave there will be serious ramifications for them. A great regime is being put in place by the Attorney-General, who has thought long and hard about this particular strategy—a major strategy for Queensland. The education part of this legislation is incredibly important. I think members opposite would recognise that when looking at the matter rationally. The good doctor who has dealt with all of these facial injuries would, I am sure, agree that education is an important part of this legislation.

Mr Bleijie: They are opposing it.

Mr STEVENS: I take that interjection. I understand that they are opposing it, Attorney-General, but the education part of this legislation is incredibly important to achieving successful outcomes.

The second part of this legislation that is important—and I think the good doctor, being the expert that he is on these matters, would recognise it—is the notion of responsibility for your actions. If people throw a coward punch, they can expect to feel the full weight of the law, in the heaviest possible form. That message needs to get out. I will deal with all of the peripheral matters in this legislation, but I highlight three fundamental areas that make this good legislation, which the opposition should be supporting and which the government is proud to bring to this House.

In terms of responsibility, what we are not doing with this legislation is blaming the entire group of people who go out at night to enjoy themselves but who have their nights spoiled by a few idiots in that group. We are identifying those particular spoilers of the entertainment and saying, 'We will make you pay heavily through law enforcement penalties, through policing et cetera.' Responsibility is a key part of this legislation. I cannot see how anyone could argue that people being made to take responsibility for their bad behaviour is a negative aspect of this legislation.

The third important part of this legislation is that we will ensure enforcement is a top priority. We have already heard that we have put on 800 new police. In terms of safe-night precincts, I am pleased to say that Broadbeach, the neighbouring area to Mermaid Beach, which I now represent—I work closely with the member for Surfers Paradise, who is the representative of Broadbeach—is one of those 15 areas across the state that have been identified as a hot spot of entertainment. I am very proud of the entertainment precinct that we have in Broadbeach. I contribute my dollars and my time there for entertainment as much as I can, although the later hours are not as prevalent as they used to be in Broadbeach.

I congratulate the Premier on his outstanding work in relation to tackling alcohol fuelled violence in a very considered manner—not throwing out the easy option of reducing trading hours. I will be honest: in the legal affairs committee I supported that particular easy option being recommended previously, but this is a considered approach. I admit that that particular measure was not going to reduce the actual outcomes of bad behaviour. We have had that proven time and time again.

I congratulate the Premier and the Attorney-General for focusing on police resources and powers, combined with the non-legislative action priorities of changing the culture, attitudes and social expectations through the education of our young people, particularly high school students before they start to experience the negative impacts of drugs and alcohol. I have had some alcohol; I have never had any drugs, except for my current flu condition.

The government has undertaken a great advertising campaign. I think the initiative of the Attorney-General in producing the red card for antisocial behaviour has been a brilliant exercise—

Mr Bleijie: You can hold that up if you like.

Mr STEVENS: That is the wonderful campaign. I think members will see that coming out stronger throughout the community, in association with other community groups that will progress this matter. The red card, I am sure, will be an enormous success in terms of promoting the unacceptability of antisocial behaviour. In fact, my good wife, who is a schoolteacher, said that she will even be using it in the playground, so she is after as many red cards as she can get to deal with the bad behaviour of young students. I think we will see great success from the red-card campaign. It will grow in terms of delivering outcomes from this legislation. That is in contrast to the willy-nilly activities of the previous government, with their attempts at imposing moratoriums on late-night trading which failed miserably. That is typical of Labor in general in that they are out for the media grab and they are unfortunately short on deliverables, be it finance, social activity or good legislation.

I thank the chair of the committee, the member for Ipswich, Mr Ian Berry, and the members of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee, who have done a great job in analysing the Safe Night Out Legislation Amendment Bill and have made recommendations including that the bill be passed. That is very appropriate. I congratulate the Attorney-General on this great step forward. I look forward to positive outcomes from this bill being passed here tonight. I look forward to the good doctor joining us in passing this very good legislation.