




Speech By  
**Ros Bates**

**MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA**

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**SAFE NIGHT OUT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (8.49 pm): I rise to speak to the Safe Night Out Legislation Amendment Bill 2014, which includes a raft of new initiatives to make our night-life precincts safer. My electorate of Mudgeeraba is home to many who use the Gold Coast night-life precincts in Surfers Paradise, Broadbeach, Main Beach and elsewhere for a good night out with friends. Unfortunately, as we all know there are always those rare few who try to turn a good night out into a night in hospital for those who behave well, drink responsibly and look after their mates. What we have seen in Queensland and on the Gold Coast as a result of this culture of irresponsible behaviour and lack of respect amongst some of our youth is innocent victims being unsuspectingly assaulted by cowardly individuals seeking to mask their own insecurities and lack of self-worth by hurting others. We have seen a culture of recklessness and alcohol and drug fuelled violence taking hold of our nightclub precincts and ruining the nights and, in some cases, ending the lives of those who simply wanted to party safely and enjoy themselves with their friends. Too often families hear of their loved ones, whom they know would never start a fight or become entangled in an unavoidable conflict during a night out, being brutally assaulted when they had their backs turned and were unable to defend themselves from cowardly attackers. Sadly, some are never able to see their loved ones again.

Let us be very clear about the sorts of people who would be violent, reckless and selfish enough to punch an innocent and unsuspecting young person on a night out, often resulting in serious injuries or death, solely because they are unable to manage themselves and were never taught respect. Those people are cowards, they are bullies, they are thugs and they should not be allowed on the streets. They are going to get what is coming to them under this government's sensible approach to night-life through our Safe Night Out Strategy. As a result of the Safe Night Out Legislation Amendment Bill, we will restore standards of responsible behaviour and respect. We will stamp out alcohol and drug fuelled violence and ensure that Queensland and the Gold Coast are as safe as possible for people to go out and enjoy themselves. We will create a new offence called unlawful striking causing death, which will deal specifically with coward-punch deaths that have been hard to prosecute under previously weak laws. This new offence will be punishable with a maximum penalty of life imprisonment. It will be a strong deterrent to those who go out seeking trouble and a proper punishment for those who have inflicted unimaginable pain and grief on their victims and their families. This violence needs to stop. Young people need to be able to enjoy themselves freely on a night out without fear of cowards targeting and harming them for no reason other than to make themselves feel tough and because they do not have the self-control to drink responsibly.

This bill is a measured response to a deeply entrenched problem. It is a sound policy that will tackle the real issues head-on. This is because, unlike the knee-jerk reactions we have come to expect from those opposite, the Safe Night Out Strategy is the result of significant community consultation. In February, this government conducted an online survey on alcohol and drug related violence that received well over 12,000 responses from concerned members of the community from throughout the state. This provided the government with feedback that has informed this logical policy response and made the concerns of the community known. The community's feedback conveyed an

obvious concern for the lack of personal values at nightclub venues, a lack of strong penalties for offenders which meant there was no deterrent for bad behaviour and young people binge drinking irresponsibly in venues and ruining the environment for the vast majority of those present. That feedback informed a draft strategy that was released in March for even more community consultation.

As a result of that extensive consultation, this bill achieves what it sets out to do. Police will now be empowered to clean up the streets and protect our young people from those who become violent. Tough new penalties will apply. Education campaigns will be launched to change the culture of our nightclub precincts and spread awareness about the importance of responsible behaviour. This strategy does not impose burdensome regulation on nightclub operating hours or impede those businesses' ability to operate, but instead goes to the heart of the problem and addresses the behaviour of a violent minority of young people. I am proud to support this bill, which will make the Gold Coast and residents of my electorate so much safer into the future. I commend the bill to the House.