




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

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MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Alcohol Fuelled Violence

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (12.00 pm): I rise today to share with members of the House some experiences that I have had in relation to alcohol fuelled violence. As a former intensive care paramedic with over 25 years experience and with that particular skill set, you are called to the most challenging cases. One in particular remains with me to this very day. It was at a similar time of year in relation to celebrating Christmas, when people go off to workplace parties simply to enjoy end-of-year achievements with their work colleagues. This case was no different from thousands of others around Queensland in the lead-up to the Christmas break. It is traditionally a time of happiness, but not for this young man. No doubt he had arrived at his Christmas work celebration with the intent of having a good time with his friends, but at that establishment in Thuringowa there was another group who were also celebrating and an argument ensued over a tray of food. This young man walked away from the incident, but he was met outside by an irate person who on that night quite simply had consumed way too much alcohol. When mixed with his rage that was just a recipe for disaster, and that is exactly what occurred.

This young man received one punch which caused him to fall backwards and strike his head on the concrete, knocking him unconscious immediately. What happened next still astounds me, because he was left on his own and he proceeded to vomit, which resulted in him aspirating—that means drowning—in his own vomit. No-one came to his aid or rolled him on his side, and when we arrived some seven minutes later it was all too late: he was now in cardiac arrest. We commenced full resuscitation with CPR, intravenous lines were placed and adrenaline was given. Despite my skill set with intubation, a nasogastric tube and airway suctioning, his aspiration had done the damage. That night, despite our very best efforts, a life was lost. A family member was lost and a son to loving parents was lost. As for the perpetrator, his life would change forever too.

There are simply too many of these stories, and the research says it all: there were 15,000 assaults last year alone, of which a large percentage were alcohol related. Not only do we have the social implications of alcohol related violence, but there is also a significant cost to our emergency departments, which have seen a 30 per cent increase in alcohol related trauma since 2007 costing \$1.4 billion. Something must be done and a conversation is well underway with the community of Queensland, who want this alcohol fuelled violence stopped. I do not want to hear of another unnecessary death in my community as a result of alcohol fuelled violence this Christmas. I do not want to hear about my friends and peers in the QAS being subjected to violence themselves as a result of attending these scenes, and as the member for Barron River recently said, they are difficult and challenging scenes to manage when everyone around you is affected by alcohol. How is it that the very people who are called upon to help are now the targets of violence themselves? I hope that our emergency service personnel do not continue to be exposed to assaults, particularly as we near the Christmas festive season. There are members in this House like the member for Gaven, the member

for Moggill, the member for Barron River and the member for Greenslopes; there is a member who is a surgeon, there is a member who was a police officer, and they all acutely know too well of what I speak. We need to do something about it, so I would ask that when the bill comes before the House each and every member give it his or her due consideration. As legislators we need to do everything that we can to stop the unnecessary damage and deaths that are occurring in our communities.