




Speech By
Fiona Simpson

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

Record of Proceedings, 13 October 2015

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Maroochydore Electorate, Alcohol Fuelled Violence

 **Ms SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—LNP) (12.02 pm): The fears of the Sunshine Coast community have been realised as we have witnessed a shocking video of another violent attack on our streets—an alcohol fuelled attack at the taxi rank in Maroochydore—and we are left wondering how the attacker has walked free from court with a suspended sentence, particularly as this was his second violent assault in less than a week. This is a shocking attack. It is completely unacceptable and we need to see tougher penalties and responses to challenge the culture that tolerates binge drinking and losing control and take a stand against behaviour that disrespects others and threatens their safety. This senseless crime comes less than two years after the tragic deaths of Wayne Dover in Maroochydore and Bruce Steensen in Mooloolaba which rocked our usually safe Sunshine Coast community. Their deaths sent a clear warning and were met by great grief and anger, with a community-wide resolve to stop the violence.

The LNP government responded with a comprehensive package to address the issue of alcohol fuelled violence in Queensland. Based on extensive community consultation, we established 15 safe-night precincts in key entertainment areas across the state with local boards to manage the precinct and police empowered to ban patrons from those precincts and apply tougher penalties for bad behaviour. The LNP government provided funding for this strategy and was working with stakeholders to put tailored plans in place for those local areas to tackle alcohol fuelled violence. Unfortunately, these plans have been left in limbo since this new government took office. This Labor government scrapped \$24 million in Safe Night Out funding over three years from the state budget and we are still waiting to hear what the alternative plans are. We are still waiting, with these local stakeholder groups wanting to be involved in the solution but getting very frustrated when they put their plans in. When I wrote to the Attorney-General and raised this issue I got a letter back in which the Attorney-General claimed that those groups had not submitted their plans. They tell me they have. They are frustrated and they want to see this matter resolved, as I do, because the answers to these issues require strategies that are integrated and funded with the cooperation of government. It is simply irresponsible to scrap one plan to tackle alcohol fuelled violence without providing an alternative.

The LNP did introduce tougher measures to tackle alcohol fuelled violence. As I have said, they have been put on hold. The LNP introduced plans to introduce compulsory ID scanners so that venues and safe-night precincts could share information on banned patrons, but again Labor has put this plan on hold. Late-night venue operators tell me of their frustration at having purchased ID scanning equipment as required but the system is yet to be implemented. This means that police can ban unruly patrons from a precinct but they cannot easily share that information with licensees. This recent attack occurred at the busy Ocean Street taxi rank in Maroochydore which local taxi operators have described as a ticking time bomb, expressing concerns that there will be major incidents or could be an incident

in the busiest precinct on the coast before Christmas. We have already seen this incident just occur, and one incident is one incident too many. This is now the busiest taxi rank on the whole Sunshine Coast. As part of any strategy in entertainment precincts, moving people out of a precinct in a timely way is critical to ensuring that they can go out and have a fun and safe night.

The rapid growth and popularity of this entertainment precinct does mean that it needs this strategy to be implemented and funded. In May the police minister was on the Sunshine Coast and promised that funding would be released, but we are still waiting. I have asked for a deputation with the Attorney-General with the safe-night precinct board and that has been accepted for this Thursday. The matter is urgent and I would certainly ask the minister to reconsider and ensure that funding is available sooner rather than later because these stakeholders have been engaged and have lodged plans. Sadly, we have witnessed a violent incident while public safety measures have been left in limbo by this government. The actions of this man who has undertaken this coward punch on the streets of Maroochydore need to be condemned. We do not want to see any more of these attacks. There must be penalties to deter them as much as possible and the strategy—

(Time expired)