




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

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**TACKLING ALCOHOL-FUELLED VIOLENCE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL;
LIQUOR AND FAIR TRADING LEGISLATION (RED TAPE REDUCTION)
AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (10.17 pm): I rise this evening to contribute to this important debate on addressing alcohol fuelled violence because I want the people of Glass House to know why I will not be supporting the Palaszczuk Labor government's so-called lockout laws. In so doing, let me start, as the Attorney-General did, with dispelling a few myths: firstly, that the Australian Labor Party has a monopoly for caring for Queensland's children and young people. It does not. I should know.

The fact is that for eight years while I worked for the Beattie and Bligh governments, including four years in the department of child safety, I listened to what the Labor leaders and ministers of the day were saying about their social justice hearts, about their genuine care and concern for the downtrodden, for the abused, for the young people of Queensland, yet I watched what happened on the ground, at the coalface with kids in care. The reality was just so, so different. It distressed me so much, I joined the LNP. I joined the LNP to offer real solutions, to offer real alternatives to some of the hardest challenges our communities face. That has brought me to this chamber tonight.

What Labor does seem to have a monopoly on is sound grab policies. Lockout laws are easy to sell. They sound sensible. They sound marketable in the seven seconds we often get to promote such policies. But hear me Queenslanders: sound grab policies are not necessarily good policies. Know this also: the LNP cares about our kids and young people too. I am a father—a father of five. My eldest child is nearing his 15th birthday. My youngest nearing her sixth. Do I care for my kids? Too damn right. Do I care for their friends, for their generations? Too damn right, because they are the future for this state and for this nation. So do not tell me Labor is the only party that cares about our kids and young people.

When my kids are old enough to go out and enjoy a night on the town—to have a drink with their mates and maybe to listen to some fantastic home-grown music—will I want them to be out after midnight, let alone after 3 am? Of course not. What parent would? But at the end of the day that will be their decision, not mine. I suspect they will make mistakes. I hope and I pray that they learn from them. Of course I will want to know where they got the money from in the first place. I will want to know that they have a designated driver or a means to get home. I will want to know that they are with a sensible, positive group of friends. That is what I will want. Will I get it? Time will tell. But, like other parents, when my kids get to 18 my opportunities to influence their decisions will diminish. So I, as a parent, as a legislator and as a policymaker, do want to make sure that the state is also providing an element of care.

That brings me to another myth being propagated by those opposite—that by voting against the lockout laws, I and we in the LNP are somehow ignoring the issue that is alcohol and drug fuelled violence. That is offensive. That is false. That is base politics at its worst. The people of Glass House and Queensland need to know just how offensive and false that is. As part of the former LNP cabinet, I

can tell you we were concerned about the increase in alcohol and drug fuelled violence not only in our entertainment precincts but across the entire state. We collected the evidence. We collected information on the strategies that have been implemented across the nation, indeed across the world, and we formed a strategy that was designed to address the problem head on and holistically.

What was in that strategy—our Safe Night Out Strategy? It included an awareness campaign on standards of behaviour and a mandated education campaign for years 7 to 12 on culture, attitudes and social expectations of alcohol consumption and illicit drug use. It included new or modified laws that created a new offence of unlawful striking causing death with a maximum penalty of life in prison; changed sentencing rules so that being intoxicated could not be used to reduce a person's sentence; required convicted intoxicated offenders to perform community service work as part of their penalty, as well as alcohol and drug assessments, education and counselling; increased the maximum penalties for aggravated serious assaults on public officers, like paramedics, from seven to 14 years imprisonment; increased penalties for anabolic steroids; allowed penalties such as lifetime bans from licensed premises; and increased fines and sentences for violent or antisocial behaviour around licensed venues.

Our Safe Night Out Strategy also increased the number; the visibility; the types of operations, particularly around drug detection; and the powers of police operating in our entertainment precincts. It trialled 'sober safe centres' in the Brisbane CBD. It strengthened the responsible service of alcohol programs that included introducing a network of ID scanners across venues in our safe night precincts. It enhanced enforcement and compliance by the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation and strengthened licensing systems. It created local boards to oversee the implementation of these and other strategies across the safe night precincts. Importantly, it increased access to public transport from our precincts.

That, ladies and gentlemen, is a comprehensive response to a complex social issue. That is what the previous LNP government, of which I was proud to be a part, developed and began to implement—and it was working. Early results in 2014-15 showed overall assaults down by almost 10 per cent, sex offences down by 18 per cent, property damage down by 10 per cent and drug detections increased by 26 per cent across the 15 safe night out precincts. That Safe Night Out Strategy is what the current Labor government failed to continue to implement. Instead, we have a simplistic, sound grab policy on the table—lockout laws.

I want to set the record straight on another myth—and I know the member for Broadwater also addressed this earlier—that these proposed laws have worked in Newcastle. True, they have. But, in similar regional centres that applied a more comprehensive solution, the results have been far greater. The New South Wales licensed premises and environs assault rate charges from March 2008 to March 2012 showed that in the Newcastle local government area the reduction was 25.3 per cent but, in Campbelltown, it was 42.7 per cent; in Gosford, it was 37.7 per cent; in Wollongong, it was 34.6 per cent; and the average across all of New South Wales was 30 per cent—all of them far greater than what was achieved in Newcastle. Again, it is testament that for such a complex issue such a simple solution does not go far enough. It needs a comprehensive package, and that is what the LNP had in place.

The final myth I want to put paid to is that every Queensland adult over the age of 25 is in favour of these laws. I received an email earlier this week from a constituent who resides in Maleny. It reads—

I am a 66 year old grandmother writing to ask you to VOTE AGAINST the proposed Queensland 'lockout laws'.

As a mother and a grandmother, my heart would be broken if Col Miller was my son. I cannot begin to imagine his family's grief at the senseless act of violence that took his life. However, lockout laws are a knee jerk reaction to a problem that runs deep within our culture; and a reaction that will destroy jobs and business that trade in the night time economy. I am not a part of the night time economy. I don't even drink, but I have family members whose lifestyles are based in this economy. I am privy to stories of the changes and evolution within this Brisbane night-time economy for more than the past decade.

...

The tragic violence that initiated lockout laws in Sydney and now proposes the same for Queensland, is so deeply ingrained within our culture that it deserves to be addressed in a manner that goes to the core of a culturally accepted social norm.

...

I don't support violence, the problem runs deep within our culture. Destroying the night-time economy is not the answer.

My very best wishes for all your endeavours.

I do not believe in myths. They make interesting reading but dreadful policy. I know we have an alcohol and drug fuelled violence issue in Queensland and, indeed, in Australia. It is a terribly complex issue and one worthy of a comprehensive, holistic response. That is why I will not support Labor's lockout laws.