




Speech By
Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk

MEMBER FOR INALA

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

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (5.50 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Tackling Alcohol-Fuelled Violence Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. This bill presents this parliament and its members with a clear choice: we take action and do something to tackle alcohol fuelled violence or we sit on our hands and do absolutely nothing. To me and my government, there is no choice. We will act and we will do something.

If you have spoken to the families of victims of alcohol fuelled violence, there is no choice. If you have spoken to the paramedics and police who deal with the victims as well as the perpetrators, we must do something. If you have spoken to the doctors and nurses in the emergency wards, we must do something. If you have spoken to the facial surgeons and neurosurgeons and psychiatrists tasked with putting the victims' lives back together, we must do something. The culture of booze fuelled bashings in the early hours of the morning must end, and this bill will help achieve that.

It is not just my government saying that. It is not just the Attorney-General or Dr Lynham saying that. It is our police and our ambulance services. It is almost every single medical doctor and nurse you are likely to come across. It is the Salvation Army and other community groups. It is the Queensland Tourism Council, Clubs Queensland and many others. These are community laws, with a community focus, aimed at tackling a community problem.

It is important we have a brief look at the history when it comes to this bill. The previous Bligh government commenced the difficult job of tackling alcohol fuelled violence with the establishment of drink safe precincts and the moratorium on very late-night trading licences. The previous government made some significant changes to those laws, removing that moratorium and allowing a spate of new premises to serve alcohol until 5 am.

We support the changes that work, and many of the previous government's reforms have been maintained. But we could not support that legislation. The one glaring omission in the strategy of the previous government was the question of reduced hours for the very late service of alcohol. What all the experts said, what all the evidence pointed to, was that winding back the hours for service of alcohol would dramatically reduce the incidence of violence on our streets. That is why we developed our tackling alcohol fuelled violence study.

It has come about with consultation with the community. They want action. In fact, a recent Galaxy poll commissioned by the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education found that the majority of Queenslanders—80 per cent—believe that more needs to be done to reduce the harm caused by alcohol related violence. Almost three quarters support the proposed late-night trading hours. The community is telling us it is time to act.

I recently went to Longreach and, with a member of the LNP, I visited a family about an hour's drive outside the town. I sat across the table from a mother who told me how concerned she is when her sons go out in Brisbane. She lives hundreds of kilometres away. She encouraged me to see these laws through. I do not want to let her down. I do not want to let down the countless other Queensland parents who know these laws will reduce violence in our communities.

I would like to thank the member for Mount Isa and the member for Dalrymple for their contribution to the discussion on this issue. The series of measures we have agreed upon will improve employment, health and safety. There will be no change to the last drinks times set out in the legislation, but we have agreed to phase in the 1 am lockout for those precincts that adopt it until 1 February 2017—that is, there will be a 2 am last drinks statewide and a 3 am last drinks in safe night precincts.

As the experts say, reducing trading hours leads to reduced violence, and that is what this bill achieves. We can tackle alcohol fuelled violence by building a safer community whilst at the same time fostering a vibrant night-life in our communities. We recognise the many positive social, economic and cultural benefits that Queensland's night-time economy brings to our state. The evidence shows that in Newcastle between 2008 and 2015 the number of licensed venues increased by 110 per cent, proving that a safe precinct is a more vibrant and prosperous precinct. Safety is the key, not just for the pub and club patrons. Alcohol fuelled violence takes its toll on our police and our emergency services resources. It puts our police and paramedics in real danger. Let me quote—

We should not under estimate the risk we are putting our police at, not to speak about law abiding citizens ...

These are not my words; these are the words of the Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, when calling on the New South Wales government to take action in Kings Cross, which is in his electorate.

Even the Prime Minister can acknowledge that this is an issue that should be beyond question, because the research is beyond question. We have all seen the results from Newcastle. Those statistics are irrefutable: a 37 per cent reduction in assaults in the first 18 months, a 67 per cent reduction in assaults between 3 am and 5 am, and a reduction of more than 340 emergency department attendances per year. We have seen similar results in the Sydney CBD and Kings Cross. Just last week the Premier of New South Wales, Mike Baird, took to Facebook to tell us how effective his reforms have been in New South Wales. He said—

Let's start with a statistic about Sydney's nightlife that matters: alcohol related assaults have decreased by 42.2 per cent in the CBD since we introduced the "lock-out laws".

And they're down by over 60 per cent in Kings Cross.

There is the evidence. Kings Cross police data also tells us that there has been a 20.8 per cent decrease in sexual assaults, a 43 per cent decrease in assaults causing grievous bodily harm and a 50.3 per cent decrease in assaults causing actual bodily harm in the first 12 months of the reforms.

People have said, 'That's Sydney or Newcastle. That's not Queensland. You can't quote those figures because it's different here.' Last week I visited the Sunshine Coast. The Sunshine Coast have a vibrant tourist industry and a vibrant night-time economy. But what they also have is a self-imposed reduced trading hours policy. Clubs and pubs have of their own accord eliminated very late trading with a 1.30 am one-way door and 3 am close of trading. Would Sunshine Coast businesses have done that if they thought it was likely to harm their businesses? Would they have done it if they thought it would affect tourism? Having taken that step, would they continue with it if they found that it did actually harm their businesses or their economy or their region? I am fairly certain that they would not.

What I do know and what my government knows is that Queensland cannot afford the human and economic costs of the abuse and misuse of alcohol. My government made a commitment at the last election to the people of Queensland to keep their loved ones safe when they went out at night, and this comprehensive package is designed to do just that. After extensive consultation with industry and community stakeholders, we have developed a multiagency policy framework that will encourage cultural change around drinking behaviour, promote responsible service of alcohol practices and create a safer environment. This is the evidence based approach our state needs. It is informed by the advice of experts in the field and the clear evidence of other jurisdictions that are successfully tackling this issue, both here and around the world.

I want to make it clear that I take on board the concerns of industry, but I also need to reiterate that we are not closing businesses down at 2 am or 3 am. Venues with an existing 5 am closing licence will still be able to continue trading in entertainment, food and non-alcoholic beverages.

In conclusion, I want to make a few comments. I went to the election promising Queenslanders I would take action against alcohol fuelled violence, and in government I have delivered. Despite the tough nature of this debate, never once has my government wavered in its commitment to introducing these laws. I would like to pay tribute to our Attorney-General, Yvette D'Ath. The Attorney has been a

tireless advocate for these laws and has helped foster the huge amount of stakeholder support. I acknowledge the member for Rockhampton, who drove the policy development process during our time in opposition. I would also like to pay tribute to state development minister Dr Anthony Lynham. Everyone knows his story. He left a very successful career as a surgeon to run for the Australian Labor Party in the seat of Stafford. He did so after lobbying the Newman government to do something to tackle alcohol fuelled violence. They would not listen and the LNP still is not listening today. Dr Lynham has campaigned for over a decade to see this state introduce these laws.

I would like to thank my cabinet and my caucus. We can hold our heads high and say that we had the courage to act, we had the courage to take a stand, we had the courage to say to the community, 'We will do something for you.' What I am concerned about is that this could have been a bipartisan approach. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity where we all could have acted in the best interests of the community. Everybody sitting here in this chamber could have held their heads high in the full knowledge that they had done something that is crucial and is critical to saving lives in this state. There is nothing more important.

I have spoken to countless people. I have spoken to parents. I have spoken to the mums and dads across this state. I could not sit by one more day and not act. This is more than a moral issue. This is an issue that has the ability to change people's lives. We stand by our convictions. We can go to sleep safe at night knowing that we have done something to change the community for the good, and that is what being part of the Labor Party is all about—standing by our values, standing by our morals, standing up for Queensland and saving lives for the betterment of the people in this state.