




Speech By  
**Hon. Cameron Dick**

**MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE**

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Record of Proceedings, 17 February 2016

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

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (12.43 am): I rise to support the Tackling Alcohol-Fuelled Violence Legislation Amendment Bill before the parliament and commend the Attorney-General for her role in bringing this important piece of legislative reform to the parliament supported by her and my cabinet colleague Dr Anthony Lynham.

The scourge on our community that is alcohol fuelled violence needs no introduction. The facts and figures speak for themselves. Last year there were more than 320 alcohol related assaults on police officers in CBD and safe night precinct areas across the state. This figure was up 11 per cent on the year before. It also includes 78 assaults labelled as serious. Alcohol was also an indicator in almost 5,230 assaults and almost 430 sexual offences last year. The most offensive thing that we have heard in this debate is the claims by the members opposite that if this legislation passes there will be an increase in sexual assault in suburbs after closing time. It is, frankly, offensive that the LNP think they can suggest in this parliament that legislation designed to reduce the consumption of alcohol in the community will result in more women being sexually assaulted in Queensland. We know the consequences of the current law, which includes those numbers—430 sexual offences last year. It was something that the member for Toowoomba North put to the parliament for which we would be responsible. It was something that the member for Buderim, who has never let the facts get in the way of a good argument, put to the parliament today. Frankly, it is offensive that they think this debate can be reduced to that sort of baseless argument.

Of course, there are the stories that accompany those raw figures. Everyone in this chamber has heard the tragic tales associated with the senseless acts of violence that have occurred across Queensland—callous assaults that have thrown lives completely off course, or worse, ended lives altogether. Those cases are plastered on the front pages of Queensland papers, ingrained in our brains, and they have sparked a community outrage about that level of violence. It is incumbent upon all members of parliament to do something to respond.

Over the past year we have also seen alcohol related ED presentations at hospitals across the state rise. At the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital indicative data suggests that those sorts of assaults in the ED department have risen by almost 40 per cent, from about 4,750 in 2013-14 to over 6,600 in 2014-15. We have also seen the number of assaults increasing against our front-line health workers such as those paramedics we have heard from tonight—the members for Thuringowa and Barron River who, together, have 40 years experience in the Queensland Ambulance Service or as a paramedic across the nation—so much so that our government has committed to implementing a public awareness campaign. It has also established task forces specifically aimed at minimising violence against health staff including paramedics who are often first on the scene and first on the receiving end of an alcohol fuelled attack.

If the emotional and physical burden of alcohol fuelled violence placed on front-line staff is not enough, there is also a significant financial cost to our health system and to our state. Of course, people who suffer from alcohol fuelled violence are not only treated in our hospitals; they are subject to often very significant injuries including acquired brain injuries that require months of rehabilitation. It can cost up to a thousand dollars a day to rehabilitate someone who has suffered from a severe traumatic brain injury. Of course, they face lifelong consequences. Nine out of 10 people who sustain a moderate or severe acquired brain injury return to the care of their family and the consequences for that family, financially, physically and emotionally, are very significant indeed. Many of those people cannot return to work for a long time and even when they do, they often find sustainable employment challenging, making the cost to our economy another burden on the system as a whole.

Of course, Queensland wishes to be a safe international tourist destination. Lockout laws have proved effective in other international tourism destinations such as Los Angeles, San Francisco and Toronto in Canada, all of which cease service of alcohol at two o'clock in the morning. This government is clearly of the view that the change to the law as we have seen in other places in Australia will not impact negatively on the entertainment and tourism industries of our state but will provide the base for growing those industries. Mr Deputy Speaker, as you would know, a number of hospitality outlets on the Sunshine Coast have imposed their own lockout at 1.30 in the morning. The Sunshine Coast, of course, is a very important tourism destination in our state. They have made that decision voluntarily and, of course, that has not impaired them in terms of what they do and how they deliver for the community.

One of the surprising things in this debate was the commitment made by the LNP that there would be a conscience vote. Is it not interesting that we have a collective conscience in the LNP? Not one person in the LNP—

**Mr Rickuss:** Similar to Labor's collective conscience.

**Mr DICK:** I take the interjection from the member for Lockyer. We are not hypocrites about saying that there will be a conscience vote.

**Mr Rickuss:** You are the greatest hypocrites.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Elmes): Order! The member for Lockyer!

**Mr DICK:** I recall there was a conscience vote on the surrogacy legislation that I introduced into this parliament. Of course members opposite wanted to criminalise homosexuality through their amendments to that bill and what they said they would do when they came into government. Those opposite would change the law to stop people who are homosexual or in a de facto relationship of less than 18 months from participating in surrogacy arrangements. That was a commitment made by the member for Kawana, who did not have the courage of his convictions when he came into government. But when we had a conscience vote, there were members of our party who exercised their conscience and voted against the government. All we had was a cheap political stunt in the community by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, who said there would be a conscience vote and of course it was a complete ruse. There was no intention ever by anyone in the LNP to exercise a conscience vote on this important piece of legislation. They say one thing to the community and always do another; that is the form of the Liberal National Party. If you do not want to be genuine about a conscience vote, then do not say to the people of Queensland that you will permit the members of your party to do that. I do not believe that, all of a sudden by coincidence, 42 members of the opposition decide to vote one way. It was never their intention to support this legislation, and it was nothing more than a ruse to fool the people of Queensland. It was something that they never, ever intended to follow through, and that represents the hypocrisy that they bring to this debate.

The other criticism that can be levelled in this debate is the complete denial by those opposite of the evidence that supports legislative reform. Blankly, blindly, blithely, they say 'There is no evidence,' and that is what the Leader of the Opposition is well known for. The Leader of the Opposition in the 53rd Parliament would say or do anything to sustain a position in the parliament. Notwithstanding the mountain of evidence that was put before the community, he denies it completely as if it does not exist.

**Mr Rickuss:** You were not here then!

**Mr DICK:** I can say to the member for Lockyer that I am here now, and I will speak on these issues notwithstanding whatever he says. The people of Woodridge spoke at the last election and we had the largest two-party preferred return in Queensland, 75 per cent of the vote, because that is what the people of Woodridge thought about the Liberal National Party government. So I will not be taken to task by someone like the member for Lockyer, who does nothing but criticise from his seat but cannot put a cogent argument when he stands on his feet in this parliament. This is an important legislative reform. This is something that will change lives in our state and make it a better place. I commend the Attorney-General again and I commend the bill to the parliament.