




Speech By
Craig Crawford

MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

Record of Proceedings, 9 November 2016

MOTION

Lockout Laws

 **Mr CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (6.19 pm): I rise tonight to speak against the motion. Like the Attorney-General and Minister Lynham, I support the government's strong and evidence based approach to tackling alcohol fuelled violence. I recognise the value of a comprehensive package of reform, one that addresses the environmental factors that provide for alcohol fuelled violence to occur and one that addresses the culture underpinning those behaviours.

I have stood in this House a number of times and referred to my 15 years as a front-line paramedic with both Queensland and Victorian ambulance services. In this time I saw the impacts that alcohol and alcohol fuelled violence has on individuals, on families and on the safety and integrity of our communities. In the debate on this issue in February this year I said—

I feel to date that there is no speech that I have done that is more relevant, more important and more pertinent to my background than this one. There are very few people in this House who have literally seen what happens on our streets in the middle of the night—who have been there and not only witnessed it but who have had to put up with it, who have had to see it, who have had to smell it, who have had to touch it, who have had to put their hands in people's chests to try to keep them alive, who have had to deal with bystanders who have been trying to assault you and threatening to cause you harm, and who have had to deal with other agencies and the like.

For 15 years I worked an average of four to six shifts per week and probably two or three of those were night shifts, and generally it is fair to say that when we are debating this bill we are talking about the middle of the night. I have read the reports. I have heard the evidence ... I have heard a lot of statistics.

What I heard from the member for Whitsunday in his reference to not only himself but the members of Cairns Regional Council is that none of those people have ever worked on the streets of Cairns in the middle of the night dealing with alcohol fuelled violence, dealing with the people and dealing with what goes on—none of them.

I was driven to enter this place because of my experience as a paramedic, particularly by the conditions that other paramedics and emergency service personnel routinely encounter in the course of their work. They are my family. I owe my life to some of them, and with some of them I have saved the lives of others.

The victims of alcohol fuelled violence are not just the patrons of nightspots and their family and friends. All too often the victims are people who hold a duty and take on the obligation to keep people safe. These are paramedics, police officers, security officers and many more who deal with the worst elements of alcohol fuelled violence.

Tragic situations are an all too common occurrence in the working life of most emergency service workers. One thing is certain: the most tragic of these incidents are the ones that are avoidable. Alcohol fuelled violence is avoidable. In this House we have the tools and we have the levers to drive change in culture and a change in environment that can reduce the risk and incidents of alcohol fuelled violence.

We know from our experience, observation and evidence that no one measure in isolation is enough. We need a comprehensive approach. I support the current measures as part of a holistic means of tackling alcohol fuelled violence.

My experiences alone do not inform my view of the laws and funding support that our government has put towards tackling alcohol fuelled violence. I have looked at the evidence. I have listened to the experts. Members would recall that one of the most positive aspects of the debate in this House was the chance to bring together a range of community and industry partners concerned about these issues. They included the following organisations: the Queensland Coalition for Action on Alcohol, including Professor Jake Najman; the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education; the Australian Medical Association of Queensland; the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons; Drug Arm; the Queensland Police Service; the Public Health Association of Australia; Clubs Queensland; and media organisations. These are just some of the voices supporting the government's comprehensive reforms. I urge opposition members to quit navel gazing and look at the reports informing this policy.

Queenslanders support the government in tackling alcohol fuelled violence to make our community safer. The reforms that our government has introduced demonstrate that the Palaszczuk government is getting on with the job and delivering on our commitment to tackle alcohol fuelled violence in Queensland. We will continue to consult and work in partnership with community groups and licensees to improve safety and amenity around our licensed venues. Safer venues, safer entertainment precincts and safer communities—that is what is good for business, it is what is good for tourism, it is what is good for the patrons and it is what is good for Queensland.