




Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

Record of Proceedings, 17 February 2016

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

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (1.12 am): Tonight I rise to make a contribution to the debate regarding the Tackling Alcohol-Fuelled Violence Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 before the House. This is an issue very dear to my heart and, as a former police officer, one that I have significant experience in. So imagine my surprise and disappointment to be told that the government members of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee used their numbers to prohibit me from giving evidence when the committee visited Townsville on 22 January this year to conduct public hearings. By way of background, I was the officer in charge of the Townsville police division for the period 2000 to 2008 with direct responsibility for policing the Flinders Street East nightclub precinct. I oversaw the implementation of the initial 3 am lockout and the establishment of the drink safe precinct. I was a member of the Late Night Traders Association and was integrally involved in the policing and overall management of the nightclub precinct.

Mr Crandon: And they wouldn't take your evidence?

Mr LAST: Absolutely not. Upon being elected to the Townsville City Council in 2008 I chaired the Community Safety and Health Committee which allowed me to continue my work with the QPS and the Late Night Traders Association overseeing the introduction of a liquor accord and a number of changes to improve the amenity and the safety of the precinct, including changes to public transport. So I believe I have every right to question the decision to preclude me from giving evidence before the committee and ask why the government members on this committee chose not to accept evidence from someone who was eminently qualified to do so. Call me a sceptic, but I now question the motivation and intention of this government in conducting these public hearings. Can it honestly say that it has made every attempt to consult with Queenslanders and were genuine in its endeavours to take on board evidence provided at these public hearings? Let me give the House an example. I was stunned to learn that at the Townsville hearings the QPS, which, I might add, spent days preparing its evidence, was only permitted five minutes to present its evidence. That is right: the QPS, which is without question the most qualified organisation in this state to give evidence to this inquiry, was only permitted five minutes because of time constraints. I find that unfathomable and a gross insult to the police officers who spent so much time preparing for this hearing and who had so much to offer.

I could talk about the stabbings, the bashings, the sexual assaults and the public disorder that I have witnessed as a police officer in nightclub precincts, but I think all who are present in this place here tonight are well aware of the impact that alcohol fuelled violence is having on our community. The changes to the lockout laws as proposed in this bill fall a long way short of what is required to address alcohol fuelled violence. It is an ill-conceived and short-sighted attempt to address a complex issue that has far-reaching effects in our community. Lockout laws and reduced trading hours on their own will not

solve the problem of alcohol fuelled violence. It needs to be much more than that. We need to be considering the compulsory installation of CCTV in all licensed premises, which includes scanning at point of entry, and a complete overhaul of public transport and, if necessary, the granting of special taxi licences to service nightclub precincts and increased use of public transport, and I take on board what the member for Brisbane Central said in her contribution about the lines in the Valley during the night looking for public transport. In my experience most of the incidents that occurred in the Flinders Street East nightclub precinct were at taxi ranks, because when you bring large numbers of people together who have been consuming alcohol and you force them to wait in lines it is a recipe for disaster.

We need to consider specialised training for all licensed security providers who work in nightclub precincts; extending the banning provisions for those persons who commit offences in drink safe precincts and lifetime bans for recidivist offenders who engage in violent conduct; no discounted drinks or promotions aimed at encouraging excessive drinking; recognition and acknowledgement, including greater coordination and training, for QPS staff who regularly work in drink safe precincts; compulsory education for all Queensland students regarding the culture, attitudes and social expectations of alcohol consumption; increasing the penalties for public nuisance, obstructing police and disobeying move-on directions; extending the powers of police to direct persons to leave drink safe precincts for periods up to 48 hours; empowering police to issue banning notices for up to three months to immediately ban a person who is behaving in a disorderly or a violent way and who is a risk to the good order, safety and welfare of others from being in and around licensed venues; and implementing improved data collection methods across emergency services, including Queensland Health, to ensure that alcohol fuelled violence incidents are captured, with this information able to be centrally verified. We have heard plenty of evidence tonight about the issues that we have had with the data and the evidence that was presented during the course of these public hearings, and I think that is a crucial point going forward. We all know the dangers of making decisions based on flawed data and, if we are to make an informed decision on this issue, we need to ensure that all relevant parties are capturing information in the same way, using the same principles and parameters. We also need to consider formalising rest and recovery services in designated drink safe precincts, including the provision of funding, and conducting a review of responsible service of alcohol training to better reflect and embrace changing community attitudes and early intervention strategies to reduce the risk of alcohol fuelled violence.

Finally, increase the number of staff within the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation to ensure that adequate resources are provided for the enforcement and compliance of liquor regulations. I know of several individuals who simply attended the Flinders Street East drink safe precinct in Townsville with the sole intention of having a fight. These people never entered a nightclub venue. Instead they prowled around the perimeter seeking out victims on whom they could prey. So it does not matter if you reduce trading hours, or you have earlier lockouts, because there is a certain element out there who will go regardless to these precincts with the express intention of causing trouble.

You cannot have one law for our nightclubs and another for casinos and adult entertainment venues. You cannot have existing premises selling takeaway liquor up to midnight but prohibit new venues—

Dr LYNHAM: I rise to a point of order. The member is misleading the House. He said that there would be different legislation for our hotels, nightclubs—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Elmes): Can I suggest to the minister—

Dr LYNHAM: He compared—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Can I suggest to the minister that he is the next speaker. So he might like to take it up then.

Mr LAST: This bill is ill-conceived. It has more holes in it than the *Titanic*. Tackling alcohol fuelled violence is more than making some changes to lockout laws and trading hours. This is a complex problem and one that requires a holistic view of all aspects of late night trading and the way in which our drink safe precincts are managed. If the government is serious about addressing this issue, it will go back to the drawing board and take on board the views and recommendations of those individuals and organisations who provided submissions during the public hearings and the broader Queensland community. All Queenslanders have a right to feel safe when they go out at night. As elected representatives, when tackling this issue we would be derelict in our duty if we did not consider all options.