




Speech By
Glenn Butcher

MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE

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

 **Mr BUTCHER** (Gladstone—ALP) (10.30 pm): I rise tonight to support the Tackling Alcohol-Fuelled Violence Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. I am the proud father of two children aged 18 and 21 and, like most parents, my wife and I are extremely proud of both of them. They are every bit the children that we aspired to raise. They have grown into young adults with many friends and, the same as we did at their age, they enjoy a fun night out on the town.

My identical twin brother is a senior police officer stationed in Gladstone who often speaks to me about the horrors of alcohol fuelled violence that he witnesses in Gladstone without fail every weekend. His recounts make us as parents, and I am sure many other parents here in the chamber, fear the out-of-control behaviour of highly intoxicated people and fear for the safety of innocent bystanders who could well be one of our own children. Sadly, at any time my brother could be knocking on the door of any one of us with tragic news caused by alcohol fuelled violence. We must start listening to those at the local coalface about the horrors of violence which is directly related to the excessive consumption of alcohol. The recurring recounts of sad and often fatal scenes from first response officers—our emergency services personnel—are proof that these problems are spiralling out of control at a terrifying rate.

On a recent weekend in my electorate of Gladstone, a 15-person affray at 2.10 am in the Gladstone safe night precinct saw a young man hospitalised and subsequently flown to Brisbane with a fractured skull after being coward punched from the side. A female police officer was presented with the task of trying to stabilise the victim who was covered in blood on the side of the road while other police officers tried to defuse the situation and arrest those idiots involved. The five who were arrested at the time provided alcohol breath tests in the watch house with the results of .200, .180, .148, .135 and .061 being recorded.

Despite the downturn in workers, Gladstone is still a vibrant, productive town, and local pubs and clubs are full to capacity most Friday and Saturday nights. From the coalface, once again, my brother has said to me that the one thing in his 15 years of policing that concerns him the most is the constant return of intoxication readings in people aged between 18 and 30. He reports a weekly occurrence in the safe night out precinct where heavily intoxicated patrons are evicted from pubs and clubs in the early hours of the morning and are involved in street disturbances and public nuisance offences. Though he has been involved with the onset of ice and other illicit drugs in our community, the constant substance is the legal and easily accessible drug of alcohol in serious assaults in and around the Gladstone area. His words ring in my ears. He says, 'Nothing good ever happens after two o'clock in the morning. I would rather go to a noisy party and shut it down than be confronted by 20 or 30 intoxicated patrons spilling out of a nightclub and fighting.'

There is undeniable proof that these lockout laws work. Looking at the report from one of Australia's most renowned medicos, St Vincent's Hospital emergency director Gordian Fulde, assaults have fallen about nine per cent across the state and alcohol related injuries have also dropped significantly. Mr Fulde says, 'Some voices call for the laws to be removed, to go back to the way things were. As time passes, it is harder for people to remember just what those days were like, but those of us who work in the front line remember. Quite simply, it was a war zone.' St Vincent's Hospital reported a 25 per cent drop in seriously injured patients coming through the emergency room since the introduction of lockout laws two years ago. Head of trauma, Tony Grabs, said the laws had been a 'breath of fresh air for the hospital'. He said that before the lockout laws once a month they would see a seriously injured patient in intensive care. Since 2014 they have only had three patients from lockout areas, which is a dramatic reduction.

To be viewed as a responsible government doing all it can to protect young adults, including my two children, on a night out touring the night-life circuit, we must tackle the problem alcohol adds to the danger head-on by passing this bill tonight to support last drinks at 2 am; statewide safe night precinct local boards being able to apply for approval for venues to continue selling alcohol until 3 am provided they have a 1 am lockout; all venues throughout the state being able to remain open beyond 2 am or 3 am in approved precincts to serve food, non-alcohol beverages and provide entertainment; and banning the sale and supply of high-alcohol-content and rapid consumption drinks such as shots after midnight.

I am confident I can say without fear of contradiction that most of us present in this chamber tonight have witnessed a lapse of judgement of someone who is proverbially 10-feet tall and bulletproof after consuming way too much alcohol in a licensed public setting. As a government, we can determine to make it harder for that opportunity to present by passing these laws to protect our communities and our children. After the horrendous statistics that have been gathered, how much more evidence is required to prove that one punch can kill and that a coward filled with alcohol is a recipe for disaster?

One of the roles of a responsible government is to use powers to legislate and keep all communities safe. We must act to do just that and keep faith in those who have placed trust in us. I implore every member of this chamber today to join with me and 74 per cent of Queenslanders in my urgent plea, which is that the government sitting here today be that responsible government tonight. I commend the bill to the House.