




Speech By
Hon. Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

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

 **Hon. G GRACE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (11.48 pm): I rise to support the bill before the House and I do so for a number of reasons. I live in Fortitude Valley. I have a 21-year-old daughter. I know exactly what goes on in that precinct. I have met with many licensees, both before and after the election. I have never refused a meeting with any licensee who wanted to come to see me. In fact, both before and after the election in my office I met personally with many who presented to the committee. They came to raise their issues and concerns. I listened. I stressed that the commitment that this government took to the election—and on which they campaigned against me—has been very clear and precise. They knew exactly what the Labor government was wanting to do. I support the changes. I think they make eminent sense. At the end of the day, this gives the licensees time to adjust to the changes. In fact, now they have at least two years in which they will be able to put in place the changes that this legislation will bring about, particularly in the Valley entertainment precinct. If they are to trade with last drinks at 3 am and the lockout at 1 am, they will have at least two years to adjust to the commitment that we took to the election in January 2015.

There are three things that convinced me that these changes are necessary. Do nothing was not an option that this government would go to the election with or do in relation to this matter. I am in the Valley regularly. As I said, I live in the Valley, I see what goes on and do nothing is definitely not an option. We need to bring about a cultural change when it comes to these precincts and other areas in Queensland. That cultural change is about sending a message. What is Labor's message? Labor's message is that alcohol fuelled violence is no longer acceptable or a normal practice for young people on the streets, whether they are in Fortitude Valley, Surfers Paradise, Mount Isa or anywhere else in the state. How do you get cultural change? I firmly believe, and I keep telling the licensees, that one of the safer places for youth to be is not on the streets late at night, but in their venues. If they have the product to attract young people, they can keep them in their venues. Venues that are licensed to operate until 5 am can have people in their venues until 5 am. It is better for them to be there, because most incidents occur on the streets of Brisbane in the early hours of the morning when young people, who are restless and full of beer or other alcohol, are roaming around and venue picking. That is the issue that is causing the problem and it needs to change.

The cultural change will be to go out and have fun, but make up your mind where you want to go. If you want to stay out until three o'clock or five o'clock, depending on the hours of the licensed venue, you can do that. In fact, after these laws are passed, any one of us can decide to go to any venue in the Valley that is licensed until 3 am or 5 am, stay there all night and have quite a good time. That is part of the cultural change that we are trying to bring about: make up your mind about where you want to go early and do not roam the streets. If you do roam the streets because you have decided to leave

the venue, you have a choice: you can either go straight home or get something to eat, have a coffee, sober up and then get transport home.

We talk about the Safe Night Out Strategy. It was in place long before the LNP government was elected. When I was first elected, I knew what was happening in the Valley with the safe entertainment precinct policy that was put in place and working extremely well under the auspices of the Fortitude Valley Police Station. That is where all of the relevant parties met to work out what was needed for transport, lighting, ambulance services and to assist with the great work that Lance Mergard and his team at Chaplain Watch do. We funded them. We put in chill-out zones, which were working extremely well. When the LNP came into power, it tried to take all the credit. It wasted money on sober centres and boards that are run not by the police but by the licensees. I do not think that there is anything wrong with licensees, but that is a little bit like putting Dracula in charge of the blood bank. There are issues that need to be addressed and you have to have a level head when you do it. I agree that there is not one simple solution. However, do nothing in relation to trading hours—and this is what we went to the election with—was not an option that we could stand by and allow to carry on.

The safe sober centres wasted about \$1 million. The former government could easily have spent that money on upgrading a number of things required in the Valley. Instead, those opposite wanted to play politics with the safe night out precincts. We had all the ideas. They claimed the credit, but nothing could be further from the truth. It was all in place before they were elected, and I was there at every single meeting. I have met with every single licensee who wanted a meeting.

Mr Rickuss: What about the scanners?

Ms GRACE: I take the interjection about the scanners. I can tell the honourable member who is most opposed to the scanners: It is the licensees. Before the election, the licensees came and saw me and said that the scanners would not work. They have their own scanners—

Opposition members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): Order!

Ms GRACE: They do not like it when they hear the truth. The licensees who met with me raised two issues. I have to be honest: they did not like the lockout laws, but they did not like the scanners even more, because they were very fearful that they would not work. Some licensees have voluntarily installed scanners, but they could not see how they could possibly be interconnected. They were very fearful that the technology was not there to deliver that and that it would cost them a lot of money. They were vehemently against it.

Opposition members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Lockyer and member for Mansfield, the minister is not taking your interjections generally speaking, so I ask you to desist.

Ms GRACE: Let us not confuse lockout with closing time. There is a big difference between the two. There is misinformation that everyone will be spilling onto the streets at the same time. Whether it is 3 am, 5 am or whatever, there will be a closing time at some point and the licensees accept that. Let us not confuse people by providing misinformation that a lockout is the same as a closing time. If you enter a premises before the lockout, you can stay there until three o'clock or five o'clock if it is licensed to open until those hours. Any misinformation that confuses that issue for young people is completely wrong and totally rejected.

I support the fact that we are giving licensees time to adjust. If they have the product right, they will get the young people through their doors. In the Valley we see line-ups that seem to go on forever and I must admit I would like to see them reduce. That is where a lot of this stuff happens. If you drive through the Valley at any time, you will see those line-ups. The young people get frustrated that they cannot get into the venue. I am hoping that, as part of this cultural change, the line-ups also disappear.

I congratulate both Minister Lynham and the Attorney-General on the work that they have done in bringing this bill into the House. I think these laws will work. I think it gives a good transitional ability. I believe that the Valley will continue to thrive. It will be a safer place. It will be one where alcohol fuelled violence will hopefully be curtailed. We can work with the licensees to educate them on this and all the other things that we brought in for safe entertainment precincts. Those things will continue. I look forward to meeting with any licensee who wants to see me. I commend the bill to the House.