




Speech By
Joan Pease

MEMBER FOR LYTTON

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

 **Ms PEASE** (Lytton—ALP) (11.25 pm): Tonight I rise to speak in support of the Tackling Alcohol-Fuelled Violence Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 and I am very happy to speak in support of this important bill, as this is a matter of public safety—a matter of great significance to our state, my community and to me personally. I have two kids—a 24-year-old and a 22-year-old—and they and their friends enjoy going out, having fun, listening to music, bands or DJs. As a parent we never stop worrying about our kids and I want to do everything within my power to ensure that when my kids or their friends go out they come home safe. I remember my son's and my daughter's 18th birthdays and their first night out in the Valley. I was excited for both of them with their new independence. However, my husband and I were terrified, to be quite honest. My son had his older cousin and my daughter had her big brother as their guide and chaperone. I took both of those chaperones aside and gave them strict instructions and reminded them of their responsibility to look after their cousin and little sister, to be very careful, to stick together, do not drink too much, drink plenty of water and never leave your drink unattended. Sound familiar? I am sure that many members of this House and indeed many parents in our community can remember similar conversations. Peter, my husband, and I waited by the phone for them to get home and only then could we go to bed ourselves, and this has not changed. My son does not live at home anymore. However, I still worry about him and his mates when they go out and I still wait up for my daughter.

My kids love to go out, and this is their right. They and their friends and all sons and daughters have the right to be safe in public. When it comes to violence, no matter what type, the Palaszczuk government says enough is enough. Parents want to make sure that their children are safe and I believe that each of us has a moral and ethical obligation to ensure this. This obligation is even more prominent when we are elected to represent our communities. As MPs we are given the responsibility to make informed decisions which will improve our community, our society and, importantly, ensure public safety. To enable us to make these decisions, we must be informed, gather information from appropriate experts, listen to evidence from experts and understand the data and research that is presented. It is also important to ensure that the data and research that we rely on is unbiased, that it is reliable and peer reviewed, that it is collaborated and supported by academic peers. It is then that we can use this data and evidence gathered from experts to form an opinion that is clear, informed and not influenced by specific interest groups or political agendas.

The harm from alcohol in Queensland is significant and we all offer our love and support to those families who have lost loved ones or been affected by alcohol fuelled violence. I raise a point of order: I am actually a committee member and I think I am entitled to 20 minutes.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Linard): Yes, that is correct; thank you. We will just reset the clock. Thank you, member for Lytton, for drawing the attention of the House to that. That has been corrected. The member has the call.

Ms PEASE: Thank you. The harm from alcohol in Queensland is significant and we all offer our love and support to those families who have lost loved ones or been affected by alcohol fuelled violence. We need to do something. We need to ensure that, if our loved ones choose to go out to a safe night precinct or to the local hotel or club, they come home safely. Everyone has the right to enjoy a night out with friends without becoming a victim. If we are to reduce alcohol related violence, it is essential that we draw on research, literature and data and implement policies that are grounded in evidence. I am proud to be part of the Palaszczuk government, as this bill is based on research and evidence. It is about us meeting our moral obligations to our communities and ensuring public safety.

The bill consists of four key measures: 2 am last drinks statewide with no lockout or, if the premises is located in a safe night precinct, the safe night precinct boards can apply for last drinks to be extended to 3 am coupled with a lockout, which will be introduced in 2017. High-alcohol and rapid consumption drinks such as shots will be banned after midnight. The definition of what constitutes a high-alcohol and rapid consumption drink will be determined after further discussion with stakeholders. To address preloading, no new applications to sell takeaway liquor post 10 pm will be approved. Existing licences allowing trading to midnight will not be affected.

This bill is based on scientific research. The government's policy is backed by the Queensland Tourism Industry Council, the Queensland Coalition for Action on Alcohol, the Australasian College of Emergency Medicine, the AMA Queensland, Clubs Queensland, the Queensland Police Service, the Queensland Police Union, the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education and the Queensland Ambulance Service, just to name a few.

Sadly, the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education 2014 annual alcohol poll finds that one in six Queenslanders have been a victim of alcohol fuelled violence and that two-thirds of Queenslanders consider the city or the centre of their town to be unsafe on Saturday night. Queensland Health's 2012 annual report indicates that there has been an increase of 45 per cent in the number of treatment episodes where alcohol was the main drug of concern. These figures are not something that any Queenslander would be proud of. I would rather explain the Palaszczuk government's call for last drinks at 2 am than explain to people why their loved ones are not coming home because they are lying in a hospital bed, or worse. Research shows that, after midnight and for every hour that alcohol continues to be served, the risk of being assaulted or being a victim of alcohol fuelled violence increases by 20 per cent. Conversely, cities where the hours of sale of alcohol are restricted see a decrease of 20 per cent per hour of the restriction. Queensland police officers, our ED departments, nursing and medical staff and paramedics are all at the coalface and witness this violence firsthand and often are themselves the victims of alcohol fuelled violence.

The Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee had the opportunity to visit the Fortitude Valley, Surfers Paradise, Cairns and Townsville precincts and meet with stakeholders and service providers. It was sobering to visit the RBH and to see and hear the staff experience. The Australasian College for Emergency Medicine undertook a two-year research project and reported that one in 12, or 8.3 per cent, of all presentations to emergency departments were alcohol related. A snapshot survey conducted on 13 December 2013 in 92 hospitals found that one in seven patients were there because of alcohol. A repeat snapshot survey conducted at 2 am on 6 December 2014 found that one in eight patients were in the ED because of their drinking. Over 9,600 patients were screened as part of the study, which found that alcohol affected patients were more likely to require urgent resuscitation and arrive by ambulance and with police. That puts enormous pressure on staff, taking them away from the patients in their care. The RBH hospital staff indicated that alcohol affected patients are more demanding, often violent and require more attention.

In 2015, in the CBD and safe night precinct areas across the state, there were a total of 324 alcohol related assaults on police officers, which is an increase of 11 from 2014. That figure includes 78 alcohol related serious assaults on police officers, which represents 24 per cent of all alcohol related assaults on police in 2015. In 2015, across Queensland, alcohol was an indicator in 5,229 assaults, which is down by 169, and 427 alcohol related sexual offences, which is also down by 39. However, these decreases in the number of offences have come at a huge cost to Queensland taxpayers. For example, in 2014 in Cairns, there were 266 alcohol related assaults and 21 alcohol related sexual assaults. In 2015, whilst there was a small reduction of nine assaults and five alcohol related sexual assaults, to achieve that decrease the cost to the taxpayer was an extra 12 to 18 police rostered on in the Cairns safe night precinct every Friday and Saturday night.

In fact, during the committee's public hearing in Cairns, the police advised that policing the safe night precinct on a Friday and Saturday night is their core business. Police in Townsville advise that they are losing almost one-third of their staffing on weekend night shifts to the safe night precinct. There is an undeniable nexus between this commitment and the ability of the police to properly address crime in areas outside the SNP. That is not an efficient use of police resources and taxpayer funds. Across Queensland, our police should not be used to deal mainly with drunks. Instead, they should be allowed to focus 100 per cent on protecting our community.

In Townsville, the Queensland Police Service planned for the committee a thorough and extensive tour of the Townsville SNP, which gave the committee an opportunity to see the great work that is done by our police officers, to witness firsthand a regional SNP and to talk to venue operators and owners and patrons in the regional area. Unfortunately, non-government committee members did not attend this comprehensively planned tour. I felt that that was a total disregard of our hardworking QPS officers in Townsville and a further disregard by non-government members by not fulfilling their obligations and responsibilities.

Mr RICKUSS: I rise to a point of order. I ask the member to withdraw that statement. It goes against common practice, if members do not turn up for some function, to not be criticised in the House for that.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): Order! I am sorry, can you clarify? I missed what the member said.

Mr RICKUSS: The member mentioned that some members did not turn up for a tour.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Ms PEASE: Evidence presented by witnesses during these public hearings suggest that, from 3 am, things are starting to wind down in the safe night precincts. In Townsville, one venue owner spoke candidly, saying that these changes will simply mean a reduction of two hours twice a week, which is a reduction of only four hours a week, during a time when he said they were generally packing up and selling very little alcohol or no alcohol to very few people.

As a tourist destination, our great state is on so many people's bucket list. Be it Cairns, the Gold Coast, the Whitsundays, Townsville, the outback, or everywhere in between, Queensland is an international tourist destination. There is much, much more to do in Queensland than just drink alcohol. Visitors want to feel safe and the safer tourists feel in Queensland, the more tourists will visit.

Newcastle has been a leader in reducing alcohol fuelled violence. In 2008, Newcastle introduced a range of reforms, which included venues closing at 3.30 am with a lockout at 1.30 am. As a result, alcohol fuelled violence was reduced by 37 per cent and this reduction has been sustained. Of the 14 venues that were operating prior to the new conditions, 12 of them are still operating. One was burnt down and the other was closed by BOSCAR. The Newcastle precinct is now a vibrant, safe environment for tourists and locals alike. There are now small bars, new restaurants and all of them are thriving. Since the introduction of these conditions, Newcastle has effectively halved its alcohol related crime rate. It is estimated that that has prevented 5,000 young people from being bashed in the street.

Prior to the introduction of these conditions, the Newcastle CBD was described as a violent drunken bloodbath. In 2006 alone, the cost to the ratepayers of Newcastle for cleaning up the blood, vomit and excrement in the CBD and repairing vandalised public assets was approximately \$1 million. Newcastle's reputation as a safe destination was destroyed and many young people were traumatised by the alcohol fuelled violence and fear.

In 2010, the Leader of the Opposition voiced his concern about his observation of areas around licensed premises in Queensland. He spoke of his experiences in Cairns, Townsville, other major provincial centres as well as Brisbane, stating that he was disgusted and horrified to see the results that a night of alcohol and crowds had on local communities. He went on to say that the rubbish, stench and general disarray that greets people as the sun rises the morning after a night out is disgraceful, citing early morning walkers and tourists as being confronted with patrons exiting venues and that the mess and stench was unbelievable and disgusting. On this occasion, I agree with the member for Southern Downs. I do not want tourists to leave our wonderful state with these types of lasting images. I remind him and those others on the other side of the House that we all have a responsibility and an opportunity to put public safety beyond politics.

I want to do whatever it takes to make it safer for my kids, their friends and everyone's sons and daughters to enjoy a night out. Although I, like so many other parents in Queensland, still wait up for my children to get home, I know that this bill will make it safer for them. It is time for each and every one of us to take the responsibility given to us by our communities, to make a stand to protect our children,

to respond to matters of public safety and concern, to ensure that if our kids choose to enjoy a night out that they get home, full of laughter and stories about what a great night they had, not to end up in hospital or worse.

I thank the members for Dalrymple and Mount Isa for putting public safety first, putting the safety of our kids before politics, and I know that parents across the state also thank you. Let me say again that when it comes to violence, no matter what type, the Palaszczuk government says enough is enough. I commend the Tackling Alcohol-Fuelled Violence Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 to the House.