




Speech By
Joseph Kelly

MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES

Record of Proceedings, 17 February 2016

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

 **Mr KELLY** (Greenslopes—ALP) (10.57 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Tackling Alcohol-Fuelled Violence Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. I will not be speaking as a parent. The greatest danger posed at my daughter's birthday party on Saturday will come from rollerskates. That does fill me with great trepidation. I will be speaking as a nurse most recently working in rehabilitation. I have worked in ED and I have worked in ICU, but I cannot speak from recency of practice. So I cannot tell honourable members what it would be like to be an ED or ICU nurse and see a young person wheeled in with a broken body or to be an ICU nurse and see families arriving at the hospital, ripped from their peaceful Sundays to suddenly be in a hospital waiting room agonisingly wondering what the fate of the child that they have brought through 18 to 20 or 25 years of life holds. I could not imagine what it is like to be with those people as they make terrible decisions about whether to continue treatment or to turn off life support, nor could I imagine what it is like to make those agonising decisions—but thankfully people do make those decisions—to donate organs. I can only imagine how difficult that situation must be for emergency room nurses and intensive care nurses, but I am a rehab nurse.

I think about my colleagues in aged care, community care, disability support workers and I want to talk about the sorts of things that we see. These are the sorts of things that do not make it on to the front page of the local paper because these stories take decades to tell. We see the groups of friends and the parents gathering in vigils with flowers and prayers, and as the years go by we see those friends naturally, and through no fault of their own, drift away. We see the fiance who never gets to the altar. We see the mums and the dads who do not see the graduation ceremony, who do not see the wedding, who never hoist the baby, who never celebrate the 21st, the 30th, the 40th or the 50th. We see the parents grow old and worried. We see them wonder what will become of their loved one. We see the siblings who thankfully step forward to provide care. This story takes decades to tell and you cannot compare one tragedy to another. They are both great tragedies and we have it in our capacity to avoid them.

I have grown up in a culture that has accepted very high levels of alcohol consumption. I have grown up in an environment where alcohol fuelled violence is acceptable and certainly normally. I was at the Breakfast Creek Hotel celebrating a nursing exam, as we did, with my nursing colleagues who had gathered from the Royal Brisbane Hospital and the PA Hospital. At the end of the night while walking home fairly late I was king hit from behind. Perhaps I deserved it; I do not know. I do not tell this story to garner any sympathy. I am lucky to be here. I hit my head hard enough to break my wisdom teeth, so I was left with a hole in my mouth and a dental bill which I could not really afford at the time. When I was preparing this speech probably the saddest thing was that, upon reflecting on that time in

life over 25 years ago, nothing about that struck me as unusual. That was a Friday night. Or a Tuesday night. Or a Wednesday night. That was just what happened. There was a fight somewhere, someone was involved and this particular night it was my turn.

That is all extremely emotive, but I am a healthcare professional. The emotions make me want to act, but the evidence tells me what to do and the evidence for these measures is strong. I am not going to rehash it because that will be done plenty of times tonight as it has already. Professor Janet Ransley's excellent article in the *Brisbane Times* summarised it well, but what we need to do is use that evidence to change the culture. Once we accepted that smoking was a normal part of our culture. When we started to challenge that notion, as we did in 1972 just by writing a small warning on a packet of cigarettes, there was outrage and outcries. The industry said, 'We'll all be rooned, Hanrahan.' But here we are many years later still changing and updating smoking legislation. Smoking rates are down to 14 per cent and we have not been ruined.

I accept that alcohol is different to smoking. There are safe levels of consumption, and we are not proposing to eradicate people enjoying a couple of beers with their mates, a nice glass of wine or a whiskey. What we are proposing to do is to intervene in our society and re-establish a safe drinking culture. We are basing this on evidence and, just like the smoking legislation that our brave forebears started to introduce in 1972, I hope that this is the start of a much broader conversation because I know that these laws are not just simply about one measure: they are about a range of measures.

Madam Deputy Speaker, when I come to vote this evening I will be thinking about the people who nurses like me care for. I will be thinking about the people who are damaged for decades. I will be basing my vote on the evidence, and I would urge all members of this House to do the same. I commend the bill to the House.