




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR NUDGE

Record of Proceedings, 17 February 2016

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

 **Ms LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (10.11 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Tackling Alcohol-Fuelled Violence Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. Binge drinking and alcohol related violence remains a leading social issue to be addressed not only in our state—we know this—but indeed across Australia and further abroad. A vibrant night-life is something to be valued, but surely its vibrancy can only be assured when those who engage in it feel safe and secure.

Despite previous liquor reform measures, alcohol fuelled violence continues to destroy lives and families and divert valuable police, emergency service and hospital resources. In 2010 the former Bligh government established drink safe precincts to combine local, state, industry and community resources to reduce alcohol related violence. It followed an inquiry into alcohol related violence and an appreciation that immediate action had to be taken to reduce antisocial behaviour. The key components of that trial were: increased and high-visibility policing; provision of support, rest and recovery services; coordination between venues, police, ambulance, community services and transport providers; and improvements to taxis zones, transport information, lighting and crowd reduction and queuing measures.

The bill before the House seeks to improve on the existing safe night precinct framework by introducing a reduction in liquor trading hours across Queensland and the service of rapid intoxication drinks after midnight. There is no question that tackling alcohol related violence and community safety issues is a challenging and complex task. But this complexity, along with vested interests, must never get in the way of taking action when it is required. When senseless deaths continue on our streets doing nothing is not an option.

This is why the Palaszczuk government went to the last election with a commitment to make the difficult decisions required to address this complex problem in our community. When people feel safe and when people come home safely after a night out, more go out at night, translating into more patronage and venues and more jobs in the industry.

Evidence shows that for every hour that you wind back the service of alcohol after midnight, violent assaults are reduced. Research from Sydney and Newcastle shows that calling last drinks earlier and stopping the service of alcohol in pubs and clubs earlier has a major impact on driving down the number of violent assaults. In Newcastle it was a 37 per cent reduction, in Kings Cross it was 32 per cent and 40 per cent in the Sydney CBD entertainment precincts. These results clearly indicate that reducing trading hours for alcohol service, even by only a couple of hours, has a demonstrable effect—a demonstrable effect on the safety of those who are out and a demonstrable effect on the police, ambulance and medical officers who pick up the pieces when things go wrong.

I had the opportunity or perhaps some would think the misfortune of touring a CBD watch house in the early hours of the morning with former police minister Neil Roberts and former police commissioner Bob Atkinson to experience a typical Saturday night on the beat. To say that the watch house was full of the misery and despair of alcohol abuse was an understatement.

What was immediately obvious to me upon entering the watch house was the lingering smell of vomit and urine from extremely intoxicated patrons who had been arrested. Almost all of the holding cells were full and a number of the detainees, again heavily intoxicated, were yelling, kicking and bashing on the doors of the holding rooms.

The officers remained professional throughout and commented that it was a usual experience for them. The drain on front-line police and emergency services crews, on our health services and on the criminal justice system from alcohol related violence is significant. Enough is enough.

I appreciate that the proposals before the House to reduce liquor trading hours, to introduce an earlier lockout and place limits on certain types of alcoholic drinks after midnight are highly contested, as they have been in other states. I commend the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee for providing such a thorough report into their considerable deliberations.

I read the opposition members' statement of reservation to the committee report and found the comparison they sought to draw, as part of that statement, deeply disappointing. The comment was made that rather than punishing the majority of people who do the right thing for the sins of a few, initiatives should focus on individual responsibility.

This bill is not about punishing the majority at the expense of a few. It is about making our night-time economy, our streets safer for the benefit of the whole community. Surely that is the responsibility of everyone in this House.

We need to do everything we can to change people's attitudes towards drinking and violence. We need to do everything we can to make sure that our kids are getting home safely after a night out. Reducing the service of alcohol, particularly rapid intoxication drinks, in licensed venues is a courageous step. No-one here has said it is the panacea for all ills that come from drunken behaviour, but evidence in other jurisdictions shows it will decrease assaults.

I have two young boys of my own. One day it will be their turn to partake in Brisbane's night-time culture. If I can make decisions as a member of parliament, as a parent to make our community safer then there is no question as to my position. Queenslanders have said enough is enough. Members on this side of the House are saying enough is enough. It is time for those opposite to have the political fortitude to say enough is enough because doing nothing is not an option. I commend the bill to the House.