




Speech By  
**Scott Stewart**

**MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE**

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Record of Proceedings, 17 February 2016

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

 **Mr STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (11.14 pm): I rise to speak in support of the bill before the House. I do so because I believe that this legislation will curb the amount of violence and the number of physical assaults in our vibrant city nightclub areas.

Upon the bill being introduced into the House, I requested the committee chair to hold a public briefing in Townsville. It did this on Friday, 22 January and heard from a range of groups representing a wide range of interests. Inspector Roger Whyte of the Queensland Police Service articulated some very alarming data sets taken from the QPRIME system. In his statement the inspector continued to outline data for assaults for the last 3½ years. That continually showed assaults at around the 11 per cent mark, while good-order offences remained around the 40 per cent mark in the drink safe precinct alone, in comparison to the rest of the Townsville area. What are good-order offences? As Inspector Whyte articulates, they are threatening violence, altercations and so forth. He stated—

But what is not clearly revealed is police intervention which subsequently alleviates the propensity for further violence later on that night or, for example, that incident.

Blind Freddy can see that alcohol fuelled violence is an issue that needs to be addressed, and addressed through some clear intervention to reduce the level of assaults. The drink safe precinct, introduced in 2010 as a trial for two years, was unclear in delivering the anticipated reduction in alcohol fuelled violence in Townsville. However, many of the police officers I spoke to support the concept of the DSP. While I, like many others, acknowledge the impact the drink safe precinct has, we need to continue to implement strategies that will reduce senseless injuries and injuries caused by people fuelled up on alcohol, given the data provided by the Townsville police.

Appearing at that public briefing in Townsville was Dr Graeme Maw, a senior staff specialist at Townsville Hospital emergency department who has been working in the ED for 17 years. He stated that Townsville is a level 1 trauma unit and sees approximately 76,000 people per annum. Dr Maw stated—

Just for this month so far—

22 days in January—

we have had 13 code greys. A code grey is a pre-notification of a violent patient coming into the department. Six of those had documented alcohol. Two were associated with methamphetamines. The other five were unaccounted for. Some of the other five probably had alcohol involved as well. When these patients come into the department, it is a massive drain on our resources. It takes multiple security guards, multiple doctors and multiple nurses. They are difficult patients to look after. They take time and they consume resources that could otherwise be deployed elsewhere within our department.

Dr Maw then cites work done by Dr Fulde. He said—

New South Wales changed their liquor licensing laws in about 2014. He looked at the data for the 12 months before they brought the change in the licensing laws in and he looked at the data for the 12 months after they brought the licensing laws in. He only looked at triage categories 1 and 2—they are the most severely injured patients, the really sick patients. He found a 25 per cent reduction in patients in triage category 1 and triage category 2 after the introduction of the change in liquor licensing laws in New South Wales.

Nightclub owners are not the enemy in this bill. Not one nightclub owner wants to see alcohol fuelled violence and the devastation it can cause at their establishment. They want to protect their patrons and provide an enjoyable evening out for everyone. So does this government, but we need to put safety ahead of the almighty dollar. Imagine the devastation that suddenly crashes through a family because of alcohol fuelled violence. This evening, members have the ability to do something to prevent this.

If members do not support this bill, every morning they wake up and look in the mirror they need to hope and pray that no-one has had their cheekbone shattered, their eye socket smashed or their vision or memory lost due to a traumatic head injury attributed to alcohol fuelled violence, because when these members who have not supported the bill look in that mirror every single morning they will know that they could have done something to prevent those injuries but they chose not to. I commend the bill to the House.