




Speech By
Tarnya Smith

MEMBER FOR MOUNT OMMANEY

Record of Proceedings, 17 February 2016

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

 **Mrs SMITH** (Mount Ommaney—LNP) (8.00 pm): Much has been said about the Tackling Alcohol-Fuelled Violence Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 in the lead-up to this debate. There has been media comment, social media comment, inflated innuendo, hypotheses, as well as the information provided by the 767 submissions to the committee. For every argument that is put forward for one side or the other there is another argument that offers a different point of view. As a person on the committee I base my decision on the 767 submissions.

I felt so strongly about this, after seeing all of the information provided and once we had finalised the report, that I actually penned an open letter to my constituents that I would like to read to the House that I believe sets out why I have come to my decision. The member for Mansfield has addressed the issues in a concise and eloquent way. His contribution was very well considered and well balanced. A lot of the points he made I have in my contribution, but I think that he has covered them and in the interests of time I will stick to a couple of things I would like to raise. I wrote this letter—

I pen this letter as the State member for Mount Ommaney, however most importantly as a mother of a teenager and two young adults. I would like to take the opportunity to discuss with you why I have decided to vote against the Tackling Alcohol-Fuelled Violence Bill before Queensland Parliament this week.

I want to start by saying the safety of all Queenslanders is by far the most significant part of this very important debate about Alcohol Fuelled Violence ... The LNP Opposition is very much focused on ensuring the right outcome that provides an evidence-based policy framework to improve community safety.

I have travelled the state listening to Queenslanders about this bill as the Deputy Chair of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee.

From those conversations and after looking at all the evidence presented, the committee has recommended that more recent data is needed, reinforcing concerns that Labor's bill doesn't stack up. The LNP believes that governments should obtain data before legislating, not the other way around. I also found that the majority of people do not support the lockout laws.

Why do I say that?

An overwhelming 767 submissions were made and of those, 746 submissions (97.26%) were against the laws.

I believe that this issue again needs a multi-faceted approach, rather than simply reducing trading hours and introducing a lockout, which is the primary objective of the Bill.

From my perspective, I'm concerned that the approach adopted in Tackling Alcohol-Fuelled Violence Bill is inconsistent and won't have the desired outcomes of reducing alcohol-related violence in all its forms and in all urban, regional and rural communities across Queensland. I believe there are significant gaps in Labor's bill that Premier Palaszczuk has failed to address, namely:

1. Concerns about Casinos being exempt; allowing them to serve alcohol and allow gambling 24 hours a day creating inconsistencies with the night clubs. This exemption also includes adult entertainment venues.

I just pause on that point because this is where Queensland is different to anywhere else in the world. We are a diverse and unique state. We should be proud of that fact. In Cairns there is a nightclub precinct virtually next door to the casino. This is where there is an inconsistency. We are saying it is okay for the casino to stay open for 24 hours a day serving alcohol, but the guy next door needs to close and have these rules enforced. The average person does not see the common sense in that and neither do I.

2. Labor's refusal to insist upon having ID scanners in venues to crackdown on underage drinking and ban continual trouble makers has been put into the too hard basket.

I want to stress that in Cairns not one submitter—I repeat: not one—was in support of these laws. The member for Barron River attended the hearing for a short time. The member for Cairns also attended the hearing. In Cairns they have developed local solutions for the local problem. The chaplain in Cairns said—

Having spent so much time on the streets, I have seen firsthand that, despite what is portrayed by the media and some politicians, Cairns streets are not dangerous. The majority of club patrons only begin to arrive at nightclubs between 11 pm and 12 am and 99 per cent of people are not rolling around drunk. The majority of club patrons are walking around the city in a fairly sober manner—chatting, dining and enjoying themselves.

A government member interjected.

Mrs SMITH: You've had your turn.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Miss Barton): Order! I would remind the member for Mount Ommaney to not use the term 'you' and to direct her comments through the chair.

Mrs SMITH: I apologise. I actually was on the committee and I would like to put my point across and I am sure that other members will have an opportunity to have their say and give their view. In Cairns they had come up with local solutions for local problems and it was working well. Everyone from the mayor right through said they do not believe they have a problem and the problems they have identified they are addressing. Two of the clubs that had introduced ID scanning had helped police in relation to other crimes so it had worked quite well. That needs to be taken into consideration when we hear it said that so many people are in favour of these laws because that certainly was not the feeling in Cairns and it certainly was not the view of the submitters.

In relation to Labor's decision to cease collecting police data on the assault rates in our entertainment precincts after June 2015, Mr John Lynch, president of the Cairns City Liquor Safety Accord, said that he had data that was provided by Bob Norton, the former Cairns and hinterland hospital and healthcare chair, Dr Richard Stone and Professor Alan Clough from JCU, who was researching alcohol fuelled violence. They had collected the data from financial years 2013, 2014 and 2015. There were an average of 160 presentations per day to the hospital. From those 160 presentations, two to four on average were alcohol related. That is less than two per cent of total admissions. The next point that he makes is that of these only 20 per cent are related to licensed premises so that would make it .03 of one per cent of total admissions relate to licensed premises. At the Cairns hearing, Mr Lynch said—

The peak time of hospital admissions is from 11 pm to 12 am. In second place is 12 am to 1 am. In third place is 10 pm to 11 pm. In fourth place is 2 pm to 3 pm.

He talked further about some of the problems that they have in Cairns. He said that it is a reality that Cairns and surrounding areas have presentations of itinerant people drinking in public areas not related to the nightclubs. That is interesting, because the one thing that came through loud and clear from the police and, in particular, the hospitals was that there is no way to identify whether somebody who is presenting with an alcohol related issue comes from the suburbs or from the precinct. In the Cairns hearing, one of the nurses said that more alcohol related presentations come from the domestic situation. It is really important to remember that when considering this legislation.

In Townsville, one councillor said—

As for the impact on the local economy, I will not go into that. In relation to unemployment, Townsville already has a higher unemployment rate than many other areas in the state, especially in relation to youth unemployment.

I do not think anyone is denying Townsville's unemployment rate and youth unemployment rate. The councillor continued—

We have heard about the QNI refinery, but we also have fly-in fly-out workers in the mining industry. Such changes as proposed will result, in my opinion, in those employed in the precinct losing their jobs and putting a successful tourism hub at risk.

That sentiment was echoed by Councillor Bob Manning in Cairns.

In both areas, nightclub owners have come together to look for local solutions. Townsville was applauded for the fact that nightclub owners had come together of their own accord and stopped half-price drinks or two-for-one drinks, which is a practical solution. It shows that nightclub owners do care

about their patrons and to indicate anything else is very irresponsible. As one nightclub owner indicated, they do not want undesirable people at their venues. It does not attract the crowd that they want and they want that dealt with very quickly. The third point that I make in relation to both Cairns and Townsville is the fantastic relationship that the owners have with the police, with whom they have worked on the safe precinct accord.

Ms Pease: What would you know about that? You didn't attend the tour.

Mr Furner: Did you go out?

Ms Pease: You didn't attend the tour of the precinct.

Mrs SMITH: I am really pleased that the members mentioned that; I thought it might come up. It is a shame that it had to, but I can tell members what happened. It was the Labor people who wanted to do that. We were quite happy to do it, but what people have not mentioned is the fact that our secretariat member fell ill and went to hospital.

Ms Pease: I was the one who looked after him, member for Mount Ommaney.

Mrs SMITH: He was not there at the hearing, was he, Joan? I was there.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Miss Barton): Order! Member for Mount Ommaney, I ask you to refer to members by their correct title and direct your comments through the chair.

Mrs SMITH: It is interesting that they bring this up, because I sought advice about going out on that committee hearing. It would not have been regarded as a formal committee hearing. I suspect that it was a night out that they wanted to have on the taxpayers. I was not having a bar of that. I would not have a bar of that.

Government members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order.

Government members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Minister for Natural Resources and member for Lytton, I am calling order. I am speaking. That does not give you the right to attempt to speak over the top of me. Member for Ferny Grove, do you have a point of order?

Mr FURNER: I do, Madam Deputy Speaker. I ask the member for Mount Ommaney to withdraw the inference that Labor members were out on the town on taxpayers' money. That is such a horrid statement. I want her to withdraw that terrible statement.

Mrs SMITH: I said suggested—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Mount Ommaney, you are not helping.

Mr Watts interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Toowoomba North, I am seeking advice. Member for Mount Ommaney, will you withdraw?

Mrs SMITH: I withdraw. I would like to say that—

Ms PEASE: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I take personal offence at the comments of the—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Lytton, the member from Mount Ommaney has withdrawn the comment.

Mrs SMITH: As I was saying, it was unfortunate that our secretariat member became ill and had to go to hospital. I found out that it was not desirable that we attend a particular committee event without the secretariat, because it would not be classed as a formal issue. I do want to make that point because I think there were other insinuations, which I did not take offence to.

The bill does not address preloading, the use of illicit drugs and the alternative of partying in suburbs. In 2014, the former LNP government introduced the Safe Night Out Strategy following a considerable amount of consultation and public debate. The \$44.5 million strategy was a comprehensive plan dealing with alcohol and drug related violence that included more than 60 initiatives designed to change the culture that has developed in Queensland and prevent further deaths from violence. It also focused on individual responsibilities, rather than punishing the majority of people who do the right thing for the sins of a few. I believe that the Safe Night Out Strategy should be given a chance to work, given all the time and consultation that was involved in putting it together. It is a comprehensive strategy that takes a multifaceted approach to addressing this issue of alcohol and drug related violence. Initial police data indicated that overall assaults had decreased by nine per cent, which

would be in line with what was said by the chaplain in the Valley; sexual offences decreased by 18 per cent; property damage decreased by 10 per cent; and drug offences proactively detected by police had increased by 26 per cent across the 15 safe night out precincts in the 2014-15 financial year.

As I said before, I understand that across the community there may be differing views on this matter. However, as the mother of a teenager and two young adults, I have always held their best interests at heart and I believe that making this decision is in Queensland's best interests in the long run.