




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BROADWATER

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

 **Miss BARTON** (Broadwater—LNP) (9.42 pm): It gives me great pleasure to rise to contribute to the debate on alcohol fuelled violence. But, like my colleagues on this side of the House, I will not be able to support the government's bill and that is because I personally do not believe that it addresses the issues.

All members of this House would acknowledge that these are incredibly complex issues, but I just do not think that the banning of shots and high-alcohol-content drinks, lockouts and earlier closing times are the panacea to the ills that the government wants to address. There are cultural issues that we as a society need to address around violence, around excessive alcohol consumption and around the illicit use of drugs. As I said, I am just not convinced that the solution that the government has put on the table is the answer to the ills that it seeks to address.

I found particularly disappointing the almost sanctimonious and patronising way in which the government seeks to lecture the opposition members as though we do not care. The reality is that all 89 members of this House care about alcohol fuelled violence. All 89 members of this House care about the culture of drinking, about illicit drug use and about making our streets and community safer but, as my colleague the member for Moggill said, we just have different ways of achieving it. On this side of the House there are 39 members who are parents. Each and every one of those members—and all 42 members including the three who are not parents—care very much about the entertainment precincts across Queensland, whether they are on the Gold Coast, in Brisbane, on the Sunshine Coast, in Townsville or in Cairns. Across the length and breadth of this state, whether it is an entertainment precinct or just a venue that serves alcohol, we all care about making sure that people are able to have a safe night out and that they are able to get home safely.

We have seen from statistics that violence was already beginning to decrease and it is disappointing that the government has not been prepared to give an evidence based approach, such as the one that the Newman government introduced, a chance. During the last parliament I had the opportunity to serve on the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee and I had the opportunity to sit in on one of the public hearings during the current committee's inquiry into this bill. That continued to show to me and reiterate in my mind that these draconian laws are, as I said, simply not the panacea to a great number of complex issues.

I have a number of concerns that I do not feel that this legislation addresses. A significant concern that I have in representing an electorate that is near an entertainment precinct but not in one is the displacement of people who will not be able to go into venues at five past one, who will feel that they are being discouraged from consuming a legal substance. I have very significant concerns about what that means for the safety of communities right across Queensland.

In addition to my concerns about moving the excessive consumption of alcohol and potentially related violence to suburbs and displacing it from the entertainment precincts, I also have significant concerns about what that means for people who need our help and our support. Entertainment precincts have access to well-trained police officers, ambulance officers and, of course, as the committee saw, a number of chaplaincy services—people who give up freely their Friday and Saturday nights to help those who have consumed too much alcohol and need help because their friends either have not gone out with them or have simply left them on the side of the road. Those chaplains do an amazing job. The chaplains themselves have also expressed concerns. Only a couple of weeks ago the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee had the opportunity to hear from chaplain Lance Mergard, who expressed significant concern about what this means for displacing violence and the impact that that has on not only entertainment precincts but also communities right across Queensland.

I am very concerned that we are not doing anything to address preloading. We are not talking about educating our young children. We are not talking about how we can educate teenagers about the consumption of alcohol and illicit drugs and the impacts of that. I am really concerned that there is no additional talk of transport measures. How are taxis and buses going to cope if at three o'clock in the morning thousands of people are being forced onto the streets where there are limited public transport resources? People are trying to get home and there is simply no way for them to do that.

I also have significant concerns about the inconsistencies that have been highlighted by my other colleagues. Of course, the key one relates to casinos. I appreciate that the government has raised significant concerns and says that it wants to address alcohol fuelled violence across Queensland. If it wants to do so, why would it seek to exclude casinos or suburban venues? My colleague the member for Mansfield and shadow Attorney-General often refers to the fact that a person could be refused entry at a venue at Fortitude Valley at one minute past one, but if that person goes to a venue in Mansfield or Carindale in Brisbane at five minutes past one, that person can get in and it is not a problem.

I think that we need to talk about culture more broadly. I am really concerned that this legislation does not seek to do that. Earlier, I referred to my membership of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee. One of the things that the LNP did when it was in government was take the opportunity to look for an evidence based approach. We wanted to make sure that we did not have a draconian measure that was simply seeking to prohibit people from consuming a legal substance and that we did not have draconian measures that sought to punish the 99.9 per cent of people who are able to go into entertainment precincts and consume alcohol without getting ridiculously inebriated and without engaging in violence.

One of the things that the LNP talked about in particular that I am disappointed has not really been discussed by this government is how we as a society can tackle antisocial behaviour. When we were in government, one of the things that I was most proud of was the introduction of the particular offence of striking.

Members of the government talk about statistics and refer to Newcastle. If the government is going to look at statistics and refer to Newcastle and put it up on a pedestal as the be-all and end-all and what we should be looking at then I would suggest that they have a look at other areas around New South Wales that did not have draconian measures imposed on them. Between March 2008 and March 2012 the Newcastle local government area saw a decrease of around 25 per cent in assault rates, but in Campbelltown there was a reduction of more than 40 per cent, in Gosford a reduction of more than 35 per cent, in Wollongong a reduction of just under 35 per cent and across all of New South Wales a reduction of 30 per cent. Those significant changes were achieved without the need to impose draconian lockouts and without the need to provide for a prohibition on the service of particular drinks.

It is particularly frustrating that the Premier talks about being a leader of a government of consensus. Clearly the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee did not give any consideration to what the submissions said because if the Labor Party had wanted to be a government of consensus then it would have paid attention to the fact that the vast majority—in excess, I understand, of 90 per cent of the submissions made to the committee—were opposed to the bill. We have a responsibility to get this right for Queensland. I have quite serious and significant concerns that this is an attempt to put a bandaid over the issue. It is an attempt at a quick fix and I genuinely do not believe that this will improve safety in entertainment precincts.

We have an obligation to get this right on behalf of all of Queensland which is why I think we need a broader strategy, not one that seeks to impose nanny state regulations on a population that is engaging in the lawful consumption of alcohol. Like my colleagues on this side of the House, I cannot and will not be supporting the government's legislation tonight. These are complex issues and the government does not have the panacea that it thinks it has. It is a shame that it has sought to bully members on this side of the House and it is a shame that it seeks to be patronising and sanctimonious like it has the answer to everything when clearly the evidence shows that it does not. The committee itself has said that there is not enough data to say that this is going to work. It is disappointing that we

are seeing rushed through the House nanny state laws that will impact the well-behaving young adults of Queensland who are simply engaging in what is lawful behaviour when we believe that they should have a safe night out as well as a good night out.