




Speech By
Hon. Bill Byrne

MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON

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

 **Hon. WS BYRNE** (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services and Minister for Corrective Services) (1.02 am): It is always great to follow the member for Kawana in such debates. I make it clear: this bill is not an absolute guarantee to cease these prospects.

Mr Bleijie: That is what the Premier said.

Mr BYRNE: It is not about absolutes; it is about a dramatic reduction in the prospects of injuries and deaths, because that is what the evidence says. I have sat here this evening and listened comprehensively to most of the speeches that have been given and have heard this mantra that the evidence does not exist. It is literally mountainous. There are mountains of evidence that prove this. This is one case in which evidence should overwhelm all other contributions to the debate.

I have pursued this policy for many, many years—well before my entry into this parliament. As a member of the Labor Party I have advocated, in many party forums for many years, for a reduction in trading hours as a centrepiece of this policy. Those who know me know that I am not a prohibitionist or anything approaching that. Because this bill is so important to me personally, I want to take a moment tonight to reflect on my first speech. At the time I said that I did not believe that every initiative that emanated from conservative politics represented evil incarnate. I suppose at the time I was pretty naive about things! That is a fact, having spent three years in the last parliament. I said that my role in the chamber and my role more generally as an MP was to promote good public policy. That is what we are all here for: good public policy. I also said—

Too often the blunt instrument of political necessity has overwhelmed or substantially compromised the development of good public policy in this great state.

I also went to on to say—

... my point is that Queenslanders are sick and tired of the argument for argument's sake, of the spin generally simply to distract or divert from the essential facts of a matter.

An outbreak of honesty might have been worth a go. The people of Queensland expect every member in this chamber to act in the best interests of Queenslanders and Queensland. If ever there was a bill that I have been involved with in the last four years in this parliament that deserved to have MPs put the interests of Queenslanders first, this is it. If ever there was a bill, of all of the bills that have been before the House in the four years I have been a member, that deserved support, this is the bill that counts. I make this passionate plea to those in the opposition: for once, use your brains. Read the material. Just this once, stop pandering to the fringe elements of society and special interest groups.

In the last parliament I spoke at least six times about matters associated with alcohol consumption and the highly destructive implications evident in all of our communities. This issue affects

every community in Queensland, despite the efforts of those opposite to suggest that we are all different. In those speeches I laid out all of the critical evidence dictating that these sorts of measures on trading hours were essential to any future progress. On 26 August 2014—2½ years or more after the LNP came to power—we actually had the second reading debate on the safe night out legislation bill, much vaunted across the chamber by the LNP. At the time I mapped out the evidence at length and reflected on the expected failures that were sure to accrue from the LNP's unwillingness to address the essential facts and the evidence. We have seen that again here tonight from these deniers.

I predicted then that the then attorney-general, the member for Kawana, would be publicly eviscerated in the community's reaction to the bill's failures in effect, as he surely has been. At the time I described the LNP's efforts on trading hours as weak, wishy-washy and ineffective. Guess what? We are some 1¾ years down the track and there it is. It was weak, ineffective and did not deliver what it was stated to deliver.

What is responsible for the carnage and the expense that has occurred since August 2014? Primarily, it is the member for Kawana and the Newman cabinet. They are responsible for this bill being debated this evening. They had the chance to lead, to put evidence first, to use their massive parliamentary majority for the good of all, but no. The member for Kawana and his colleagues did not have the ticker. The bizarre part of all of this is that they would not even follow the recommendations of their own expert panel.

The member for Kawana opposes this bill, as we have just heard. I can assure him that there will not be a single member of the Queensland Police Service who will forget it—not one. From senior officers to recruits at the academy, they want this bill to pass. Across-the-board, they are uniform in this position, because they know the truth of the situation. They know what it is like on the ground. They know the facts; the member for Kawana does not. Frankly, they are sick and tired of being assaulted by drunken clowns and being punching bags.

The LNP's opposition to this bill will not go unnoticed. People like the member for Kawana and his previous cabinet colleagues in the former government do not actually care about the welfare of officers. It is all a game to them. It is a debating society. In 2015 there were 324 assaults on police officers that occurred in the 15 safe night precincts, but that is okay with the LNP. 'Our plan is working, can't you tell?' Perhaps 324 assaults involving police might say something else.

What about this: there were 13,305 reported offences in the same locations—that is, safe night precincts. I do not know how you can have 13,305 offences over the period of a year in these locations and say that it is working. You cannot get a more damning critique of the member for Kawana's 2014 effort. The LNP stands intellectually and morally void on this issue. This bill provides a unique opportunity for once for those opposite to redeem themselves, but it appears that that is not going to happen tonight. I assume that some of those opposite may privately agree with this bill. I suspect there are genuine moderate Liberals across the chamber such as the member for Mansfield and perhaps others with strong convictions. They must be minded to support these measures. That is because the evidence is clear—absolutely clear. The evidence is literally on the table. There is no grey here. There is no doubt at all about what will be effective in reducing the violence. That is why the member for Mansfield's recently reported comment is so weak. He said as recently as yesterday or the day before—

Although we are moved by emotion, we've got to make a final decision based on rational judgement.

The LNP is making a rational judgement here, but it has nothing to do with evidence and everything to do with politics. It is rational in a political context, a political choice. Frankly, I do not know how those opposite can lie straight in bed if there was a prospect of this bill failing. Every death, every terrible injury and every incident involving nurses or doctors being assaulted would have the LNP's fingerprints all over it. I never want to hear anyone from the opposition talking about how they support the Queensland Police Service, because tonight has been seen for what it is—a fabrication, a proven falsehood, a deception, and deliberately so.

In the time that I have left I want to reflect on the fact that 70 per cent of Queenslanders want this legislation to pass. How do you think sensible members of the community are going to take to the LNP's flag after its position on this bill? This is good evidence based policy that is supported by a great majority of Queensland but amazingly opposed by the LNP. The opposition can be sure that we will not let it forget—an opposition once again hoisted on the petard of political opportunism on the prospect that it was going to win this debate. On the prospect it was going to win this debate, it was prepared to stand up and say things that are clearly unsubstantiated. The opposition should be—and I am sure some may be—absolutely ashamed, because there is no more damning reflection of its efforts than what it did in August 2014. It is shameful that the LNP is so hungry for power that it would take this position in the House on such a critical bill. It is so desperate that it is prepared to try to spear this bill. This is a disgrace, because this bill may never see the light of day again if it is defeated. In such a circumstance

it would be of grave concern to many Queenslanders who have approached me and the government over the last three years since we have had this policy in place. I am firmly and completely committed to this bill and I wish others in the House would join me.

(Time expired)