




Speech By
Hon. Yvette D'Ath

MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE

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

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Training and Skills) (1.56 am), in reply: I thank all honourable members for their contributions to the debate on the Tackling Alcohol-Fuelled Violence Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. I would like to thank all of the committee members and pay special thanks to my colleagues, the member for Ferny Grove, as chair of the committee, the members for Lytton and Capalaba and before that the members for Morayfield and Ipswich West. I understand that it is a busy committee with the volume of legislation that it examines. I sincerely thank them for the hard work that they conducted behind the scenes. It is absolutely critical to this government delivering on its election commitments.

I thank the Katter party, the members for Mount Isa and Dalrymple, for their constructive and sincere efforts to ensure Queenslanders benefit from the passing of this legislation. I would also like to thank within my department the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation. Deputy Director-General David Ford and his team superbly managed what is a complex area of law, engaged with the parliamentary committee process, consulted with stakeholders and undertook the legislative process. I thank David Ford for his and his team's professionalism.

To those organisations that contributed to the open letter to Queenslanders, I cannot say thank you enough for their efforts. I will try to name each individual organisation, but please forgive me if I inadvertently leave someone out. They were: the Queensland Coalition for Action on Alcohol, the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine, AMA Queensland, the Queensland Police Union of Employees, the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education, Clubs Queensland, Healthy Options Australia, National Reliance for Action on Alcohol, the Salvation Army Eastern Territory, the national Trauma Committee of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, Lives Lived Well, the Public Health Association of Australia, the Queensland Nurses' Union and the Queensland Network of Alcohol and Other Drug Agencies.

I would also like to thank those organisations and people who supported our bill: the Queensland Tourism Industry Council; the Queensland Police Service; the Queensland Ambulance Service; the Australian Christian Lobby group; those individual police officers, doctors, paramedics, safe night out board members, academics, researchers, mums, dads and community members who all stood shoulder to shoulder with me around the state. I would also like to thank the Queensland Coalition for Action on Alcohol on inviting me to the forum that they held today where they discussed the facts and myths surrounding the restriction of liquor trading hours. I am informed that members opposite were invited but all 42 of them were not able to attend.

Last but not least I would like to thank the member for Stafford, a minister in the Palaszczuk government, Dr Anthony Lynham. His determination to see these laws passed is literally unstoppable. I thank and congratulate him. He lent his significant reputation to this important area and gave up a

successful career as a surgeon because he realised that, as parliamentarians, we have an amazing collective power to not just treat the problem one patient at a time but to drive cultural change and create institutional reform. The Palaszczuk government is committed to achieving cultural change around our drink habits.

I am disappointed, if not surprised, by much of the contributions from the members of the opposition. Rather than go through each and every furphy we heard or to point out the glaring hypocrisy of the Leader of the Opposition in his previous positions or the member for Moggill, who has unfortunately turned his back on the profession, overall the debate from those opposite can be reduced to some pretty simple and pretty disingenuous positions. They claim there is no evidence without explaining how they are ignoring the academics, the researchers, the doctors, the research paper, after paper, after paper that show that these strategies work. They claim that we should not abolish safe night out initiatives. We are not. They have not been abolished.

The opposition want evidence. We have produced it. I tabled 15 research papers referred to by Professor Jake Najman at the committee hearing. The opposition want evidence. We have produced it. It is clear to see. I have tabled some of it. It exists. It is tangible. It is real. But, like ostriches with their heads in the sand, the opposition members chose not to accept it. The truth is that if someone is still trying to claim there is no evidence they are simply not looking. They just do not want to see it.

As much as I do not want to drag out this debate, I want to take members to a couple of matters in the committee report to reinforce what evidence is really out there. As Professor Jake Najman said in the committee hearing in Brisbane—

When people put evidence to you, the questions you need to ask are: how credible is that evidence and does it meet the consensus of researchers who will look at the research design? In that context, we have looked at the research worldwide that relates to the legislation that is being proposed through the parliament. I can identify, depending upon how strictly you apply those criteria, somewhere between 15 and 20 research papers around the world that have tested these propositions.

And I have tabled them here in this parliament. He continues—

These research papers come from Norway, the United Kingdom, Brazil, Australia and other countries. All of these research papers have, as a key element, that they looked at what happened with drinking and violence and injuries before legislation was changed; they had control groups where there were other areas that were not subject to the legislation or other times; and they then looked at the outcomes some time past the legislation being enacted.

We could look at every one of those studies and we would quibble about some aspects of each of those studies. But, in their totality, they present a picture that is clear and consistent across studies. Is it absolutely certain? From my research perspective, the answer is no. Is it highly probable and consistent with the available evidence? The answer is absolutely it is. There is a broad consensus across the world, not just in Australia, that there are three or four key factors that reduce the number of injuries, the number of deaths, the number of people disabled, the violence, the crime—there are a whole range of indicators ... The evidence indicates very consistently that when you increase the number of liquor outlets or you increase the number of hours the liquor outlets are operating, you increase the number of injuries, accidents and other negative outcomes, and when you reduce those you have a reduction in the consequence.

I go on to the Norwegian study, which was explained by Professor Kypri at the committee's hearing. He stated—

This was very important because, in contrast to what had gone before, this was started by a law that permitted municipalities to set trading hours. In fact, 18 cities modified their trading hours in the first decade of this century. Ten of them restricted hours, three of them extended them and five did both. They extended and then restricted, having seen that there were problems. This all happened between the hours of 1 am and 3 am, so there is a fair amount of uniformity to start with and 18 different experiments, in contrast to what we have in Newcastle and Sydney, which are just two. They found a 16 per cent change in assaults per hour of trading, that is, where trading increased by an hour, the average increase in assaults was 16 per cent; were it reduced by an hour, the average reduction in assaults was 16 per cent. That is actually fairly similar to what we found in Newcastle, where we saw one-third for a two-hour change in trading. It extends that literature that I referred to before, which expressed some hesitancy to reach a conclusion about smaller changes, which are what we are talking about, as I understand it, in Queensland.

There is the evidence. It is there to see. It is international evidence. It is peer researched and it is there for everyone to see. So how could so many members on the other side get up and claim there is no evidence? The member for Moggill said, 'I just want to support sound, good evidence based policy.' Well, here it is. It is here for everyone to see. We heard from many opposite that they had a comprehensive policy. It was working. There is no need to do this. There is no evidence that this would make a difference. I think one member referred to these laws as 'tinkering around the edges', that there is no point to doing this.

In my last reference to the parliamentary committee report, I refer to Professor Peter Miller, from Deakin University, who had compared the impact of Newcastle's liquor restrictions with voluntary measures implemented in Geelong, Victoria. This followed from his evaluation of the impact of the Geelong interventions in 2011. The committee summarised as follows—

The Geelong Liquor Accord, one of the first liquor accords in the world, includes the following interventions:

... a shared banned patron list; agreed levels of security surveillance; licensed premises that are identified as being 'high risk' implementing ID scanners; encouraged use of two-way radios, and; agreement that police be contacted immediately upon the identification of problem patrons.

The parliamentary committee summarised as follows—

At the time of the study there was a 'safe taxi rank', ID scanners in every post-1 am venue, a two-way radio program connecting police to security staff and staff to each other, cleaners, taxi rank staff and fast food venues. A community education program (Just think) was underway, and there was a significantly increased police presence and increased penalties for anti-social behaviour.

Does it sound familiar? Because it is the safe night out principle. That is the policy that they adopted. What were the findings of Professor Peter Miller's research? The parliamentary committee goes on to state—

The study used specific categories of alcohol-related hospital admissions as measurement (reported assault rates have been used as measures in other studies), and found:

Alcohol-related injury ED presentations in the Geelong region have risen consistently since 2005. Furthermore, none of the interventions implemented in Geelong coincides significantly with any sustained decrease in alcohol-related injury rates.

The committee report goes on to say—

A report on the research evidence about alcohol-related harm and the night-time economy referred to this research as follows:

In summary, the number of assaults in Newcastle dropped significantly during the study period whereas the community-based interventions had no significant effect in Geelong. This is in line with the current literature. Of note is the increase, rather than a decrease, in alcohol-related assault rates after the implementation of the alcohol industry funded 'Just Think' social marketing campaign. The most likely explanation for the different results between Geelong and Newcastle is that none of the interventions in Geelong address alcohol consumption. Interventions that address total alcohol consumption have consistently been found to be the most effective in reducing alcohol-related violence ...

The evidence is clear.

The member for Surfers Paradise made comments about claims by the Premier. I was at the press conference where there were questions about whether police numbers would be reduced if there was a decline in assaults. Statements were made about the Premier allegedly claiming that we would be taking police away. I heard the member for Surfers Paradise making claims that we would reduce the number of police in these precincts. I want to cite another quote from 2010 which states—

There have even been suggestions by the police that just reducing trading hours by an hour or two could mean that we would have about 170 fewer police officers running around looking after those areas. To me, they are quite comprehensive recommendations.

Who said that? The Leader of the Opposition did in 2010. Those opposite should start talking to their own leader about his views on these issues. The opposition say they care about alcohol fuelled violence. The opposition say they want cultural change—and we heard a lot about cultural change—but here it is: you have to drive cultural change. There is an argument that we have to treat every area differently. We cannot say that we want cultural change in the Fortitude Valley but not in Cairns or Goondiwindi, which was one of the areas the Leader of the Opposition talked about many years ago. Let us not have cultural change in Townsville or in Surfers Paradise. We just need it in certain areas. That is not the way we are going to change our image about alcohol abuse and misuse, and Australians being known for knocking back drinks and drinking to excess.

They continue to refuse to take the very action required to tackle the violence that is right there in front of their faces. They continue to refuse to make the changes to drive cultural change. They continue to turn their backs on the will of the Queensland people. This debate should not have been a divisive debate about pitting one area of the state against others. This is unquestionably a statewide issue. The opposition claim they are opposed to casino exemptions but had no concerns with the same rules applying when they were in government for three whole years. They claim our legislation is too complex, but at the same time in the same breath it is too simplistic.

The government will move forward and implement this legislation. We will continue to work with the community. We will continue to work with stakeholders throughout the implementation of this important reform. We will bring about a safer and more prosperous night-time economy. I thank the Premier for having the courage to bring this from opposition into government and follow through and deliver for the people of Queensland. I once again thank Dr Anthony Lynham for his contribution and advocacy over so many years and for his willingness to give up his profession to be here and see this to fruition to make a difference in lives. I thank all of those advocates out there and those working on the front line. I commend the bill to the House.