




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR HINCHINBROOK

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LIQUOR AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr CRIPPS** (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (4.06 pm): Here we are again fixing up another dog's breakfast created by this incompetent Palaszczuk Labor government. I want to start by congratulating the non-government members of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee, led by the deputy chair, the member for Coomera, for their statement of reservation in the committee report. Those LNP members on that committee have really laid it out very clearly in that statement for all other members.

The Palaszczuk government could have saved everyone a lot of time, money, concern and stress if they had listened to the hospitality industry and the LNP and left the evidence based Safe Night Out policy implemented by the previous government in place. The former LNP government rolled out the Safe Night Out Strategy in August 2014 and we remain committed to that policy. The Safe Night Out Strategy was praised by a number of people who submitted to, and appeared before, the committee during its consideration of this bill including Nick Braban from Our Nightlife Queensland. In response to a question he said—

The safe night strategy was a world-leading strategy, in our opinion, developed in partnership with all stakeholders. If that had been allowed to continue, we would be in a better place than we are in today. There is no doubt about that.

The Palaszczuk government overturned the former LNP government's Safe Night Out Strategy for political reasons—plain and simple. Its intervention in the legislative and regulatory framework which applies to the hospitality industry has been clumsy and unjustified and was done mostly to satisfy the personal crusade of just one of its number: the member for Stafford. In February last year every other Labor MP either stood back and watched the Attorney-General make a mess of the legislation and the regulations under which the hospitality industry operated or joined in the debate and helped her. All Labor MPs opposite are collectively responsible for this utter state of confusion, uncertainty and administrative chaos.

As I pointed out in previous debates on this issue, there are no safe night precincts in the Hinchinbrook electorate and there are very few nightclubs of any kind. However, I want to make a contribution to this debate on behalf of those two great North Queensland cities at either end of the Hinchinbrook electorate, Cairns and Townsville. I was amazed last year when the members for Barron River, Cairns—before he had his friendly chat with the Deputy Premier—Mulgrave, Mundingburra, Townsville and Thuringowa blindly lined up behind Labor's politically motivated amendments in the face of shocking youth unemployment figures in the two cities that they are supposed to represent. The hospitality industry is one in which a lot of young people are employed on a full-time, part-time or casual basis in a variety of roles including food and beverage services, supervisory and management positions, security and entertainment.

This is just as true in a tourism city like Cairns and a university city like Townsville as it is in Brisbane or the Gold and Sunshine Coasts. The committee report refers again to Nick Braban from Our Night-Life Queensland, who indicated that lockouts had resulted in reduced investment in areas such as the booking of musical acts, hiring of staff, renovation of premises and marketing of events. We have

all heard and read about the battle our young people have faced with lost jobs, lost hours on rosters and cancelled gigs. In particular, the group representing the hospitality industry in Townsville, Safe Night Townsville CBD Precinct Inc, made detailed and lengthy submissions to the committee which have been highlighted in its report and in the non-government members' statement of reservation. In relation to the proposal to repeal the lockout provisions, the Townsville group said—

Lock outs have come and gone in various states with never a clear evidence based conclusion if lock outs work for the reduction of offences or assaults. Time and time again the multipronged approach to include lock outs with an earlier cessation of alcohol service simply do not work and should be repealed in consideration of the Bill and to never be considered again ...

In relation to the proposal by the Palaszczuk government to tighten up the temporary late-night extended hours permit scheme, Safe Night Townsville CBD Precinct Inc commented—

The impacts of reducing the number or completely [removing] the current 'one off extensions' will negatively impact the regional areas, and will stop licensed and small businesses who genuinely use the extended hours permits for events that come to the region.

I agree with the LNP members on that committee when they point out in their statement of reservation that it is ridiculous for this government to accuse licensed premises of trying to game the system when applying for extended trading hours permits, when that system is managed by the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation and the same office considers and then rejects or approves every single extended hours permit issued under the current legislation.

The LNP does not support the changes to the extended trading hours permit system because such changes would be a retrospective action. We all know that retrospective legislation makes it very difficult for businesses to plan for the future and employ more Queenslanders, particularly in this case young Queenslanders, including those in regional cities like Cairns and Townsville where youth unemployment is particularly high. In a place like Townsville, part of which I represent, these extended trading hour permits will be essential for licensed premises to adequately accommodate patrons on occasions in our city where there are significant public events such as North Queensland Cowboys home games, when we host the V8 Supercars race or when there are major concerts, performances or festivals in Townsville.

When we debated the Labor government's legislation in February last year we had contributions from North Queensland members, notably the member for Barron River, who said in his contribution to that debate—

I have stood in this House a number of times and referred to my 15 years as a front-line paramedic with both the Queensland and Victorian ambulance services. I feel to date that there is no speech that I have done that is more relevant, more important and more pertinent to my background than this one.

He went on to say—

I want to commend the Attorney-General, Minister Lynham and the Premier for the stance they have taken on this. I support this 100 per cent. Governments must take the lead. We must set the bar and we must set it at a standard so that others will follow.

He concluded in this fashion—

But tonight I get to be part of something special: making a larger difference to save countless lives and prevent incalculable carnage. All I have to do is sit in my seat and vote with the government on this bill, a government which I commend for taking this bold step of change. I commend the bill.

A little bit later this afternoon the conviction of the member for Barron River is going to be tested, because he will just sit in his chair again and support the government while it implements a regime that is exactly the opposite of which he advocated. Just over 12 months ago he stood in this House and advocated for the opposite of what he will vote for later on this afternoon.

In her contribution to the debate just over 12 months ago my old friend from Townsville, the member for Mundingburra, said the following—

We need to take action, and our evidence based approach is proven to achieve decreases in assaults, ultimately saving lives and lessening the impact of this issue.

She went on to say—

This government is prepared to take action by implementing evidence based measures in order to lessen the human cost of alcohol fuelled violence. Over the past few months during public debate on the legislation, the primary contact my office has received about our legislation being unreasonable has been from club owners whose concerns are about lost revenue, but what we have seen and heard is that the safer people feel the more they go out and the more money they spend, which is good for our economy, jobs and tourism.

The member for Mundingburra concluded in this fashion—

We are confident that these measures will not only improve safety for patrons and staff of licensed premises and entertainment precincts but also ensure a thriving night-time economy.

That is what the member for Mundingburra said in this House just over 12 months ago during the debate on the Labor Party's legislation on exactly the same issue, and this afternoon the member for Mundingburra will file in here into the same seat and vote against all of the things that she passionately endorsed in her contribution to the debate just over 12 months ago. That is the way that the people of Cairns and Townsville have been treated by their local members in this regard. They have been treated very poorly by this government on this issue, and the members representing them have represented them very badly.

The impacts on local businesses, hospitality, industry workers and law-abiding patrons have been ignored in favour of some cheap and nasty politics by the Labor Party, and now it has blown up in their face.