




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT

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LIQUOR AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr MOLHOEK** (Southport—LNP) (5.54 pm): Those opposite really do not understand, do they? We heard the member for Logan say that Queenslanders want government to listen. I was at the public hearing that the member for Ferny Grove, Mark Furner, chaired on the Gold Coast. Quite clearly in that hearing they did not listen. We had the privilege of hearing from Dr Green, the Director of Gold Coast University Hospital—

Mr Furner interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Minister!

Mr Furner interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am on my feet. Minister, I would ask you not to interject. I want to hear the member for Southport.

Mr MOLHOEK: I have no idea what he was saying. I could not hear him over here.

Dr Rowan interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: That includes you, member for Moggill.

Mr MOLHOEK: We heard at the Gold Coast hearing from one of the longest serving directors of emergency services in Australia. In fact, Dr Green has been the head of ER at the old Southport Hospital, then Gold Coast Hospital and now the current Gold Coast University Hospital for over 30 years. He has also had crossover responsibility with the Robina-Gold Coast emergency department from time to time as well. In his own words, he says, 'I am the second longest serving ED director,' in the history of the local health service. At that hearing he said—

During that time I have been able to treat, observe, manage and look at the problem of alcohol fuelled violence within the Gold Coast community.

It is really clear to us that this is a problem that has been around for a very long time.

As someone who grew up on the Gold Coast, I can remember back in the seventies my older siblings coming home and talking about some of the challenges of going out down in Coolangatta and Surfers Paradise. I can remember an era when the government would send the riot police down every New Year's Eve. Dr Green is right; these problems have been around for a long time. The point that Dr Green made in the hearing, which the government failed to hear and listen to—because it did not suit them to take any notice of this advice—is the fact that things have changed. What has changed is not the alcohol fuelled violence but the drug fuelled behaviour. Government members on that side of the House have done their level best to wind back the laws and allow the bikies and the criminal gangs open slather on our kids and nightclubs. It is the extreme drugs that are fuelling that alcohol fuelled violence on the Gold Coast; it is not the alcohol itself. I want to read from Dr Green's evidence because he makes some interesting comments. He states—

We have noticed in the last few years that there is an increasing change in the nature and patterns of recreational drug use on the Gold Coast. The issue of alcohol alone was that alcohol would increase some impulsivity but decrease motivation.

He is saying that in the past people would drink and they may smoke a bit of pot or take some of the drugs of old, but it would actually slow down their behaviour; it would decrease their motivation. He goes on—

You basically had a sedative drug where people would have risk-taking behaviours but they may not be able to carry them through.


However, today—

In combination with stimulants such as amphetamines, alcohol and amphetamines have increased impulsivity, increased risk and increased aggression and inclination rather than demotivation that may happen with alcohol alone.

He went on to say that one of the other speakers at the hearing would also confirm that was the case. Here is the problem: on the one hand we have a government that says they are committed to dealing with alcohol fuelled violence, but in the same breath they say, 'But we're not prepared to do anything about the criminal gangs that are feeding this violence and encouraging the production and distribution of these dangerous drugs on the Gold Coast.' Dr Green further states—

What do we do about it? What do we look at? Where do we go? In terms of the issue of lockouts and closures, from a purely pharmacological point, alcohol is a socially accepted drug.

What we are dealing with here is a question of drug distribution. These words are all in *Hansard*; they are all in the transcript and are a matter of public record.

 **Mr MOLHOEK** (Southport—LNP) (7.42 pm), continuing: If I can take members' minds back to where we were before the dinner break and the six o'clock debate, I was relating to the House the advice of the eminent Dr Green who has been the head of ER at the Gold Coast Hospital and with the Gold Coast health service for many years. The point I was wanting to make was that the government has not listened. It is amusing because out of this failed legislation of theirs they commissioned an interim evaluation report when what they should have done is heeded the advice of Dr Green that he gave to the hearing some 14 months ago. He said—

As far as where we would want to go in the near future, we looked at our data and it is really hard to get exactly what it is. We need research assistants in that place, because even if you think it is not alcohol related sometimes when you drill down into it the person who is presenting with an injury may not disclose until I refer them to a social worker ...

On that occasion Dr Green went on to discuss in great detail the kind of research and the funding that the health services need to actually get to the bottom of some of the issues to do with alcohol fuelled violence. He also said roughly one-third of the patients that they see at ER are alcohol related presentations. They are not seeing the perpetrators of alcohol related violence; more often than not they are seeing the victims. He goes on to make this point—

They present in many and various ways. They present as victims of domestic violence. They present in patients with chronic alcohol consumption, with chronic disease. They present with trauma from vehicle related accidents through to falls through to all sorts of other things. Alcohol related trauma and alcohol fuelled violence is not just a disease of nightclubs and those precincts, although most of the cases around are. A lot of it happens in the house.

The reason I went into that is that one of the problems with the nightclub lockdown laws is that it forces people back into the suburbs. We have heard evidence in the past that the alcohol fuelled violence occurs at home or out in the local communities and it actually makes it more difficult to police and often the results are more hidden and the consequences of that violence are more severe but it does not come to light. That is why it was so important and that is why I am proud to be part of a government that actually launched the Safe Night Out Strategy. This evening I attended the unveiling of Campbell Newman's portrait.

Government members interjected.

Mr MOLHOEK: The painter, David Hinchliffe, spoke about the need for respect amongst colleagues.

Government members interjected.

Mr MOLHOEK: A colleague of those opposite actually suggested that it would be great if we mixed up the House and we sat in alternate seats so we might get to know each other and work together more collaboratively. But I digress. David Hinchliffe said about the former premier, 'Campbell was a conviction politician. He may have gone too hard too fast, but he was determined to try to fix things.' One of the things that he tried to fix and that we were very committed to, which those on the other side of the House were very quick to scrap, was our Safe Night Out Strategy. It was all about saying to our young people and visitors to the Gold Coast that we actually trust them, that a great night out is a safe night out. We did not want to shut things down, put people out of work, introduce ill-thought-out policy and short-term fixes, kowtowing to ill-informed people. We recognised that this was a reality, it was something we needed to address and deal with in our society. We need to manage it. We need to educate people. We need to provide a safe environment for people who visit the safe night precincts

on the Gold Coast and here in the Valley. We need to provide places where people can go and enjoy themselves and do so knowing that there will be support services and a focus around them that will actually make sure that that environment is a safe place for them to be.

I rise tonight to express my frustration at the lack of listening by those on the other side of the House. They are quick to try to shut down licensed venues and restrict people's behaviour. The only people they do not seem to be bothered about restricting are the criminal gangs and the drug dealers who manufacture these products on the Gold Coast. They have not given the police the support they need. They have not really supported the principles of the Safe Night Out Strategy. My only hope is that the government will stick by the changes that come out of this new legislation.