




Speech By
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LIQUOR AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (7.59 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Liquor and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2017. In early 2015 the Queensland Premier, then opposition leader, went to the election promising 3 am last drinks with a 1 am lockout. She then backflipped and changed her mind, suggesting instead to implement a 2 am last drinks outside safe night precincts and a 3 am last drinks with a 1 am lockout inside safe night precincts. The Premier, no surprise, has now backflipped again, deciding to scrap the lockout laws altogether after an interim evaluation report said that it was unlikely a lockout would alter current trends. Backflips and over 150 reviews—this is governance via procrastination.

Why am I not surprised? As my colleagues on this side of the chamber have mentioned, the former LNP government had a real plan to tackle alcohol fuelled violence. In 2014 the former LNP government introduced its Safe Night Out Strategy following months of detailed and thorough public consultation and discussions on the issue of alcohol and drug related violence. Let us compare and contrast for those following at home. The previous member for Brisbane Central, Mr Robert Cavalluci, did a superb job in this area of key public policy. He understood the need to engage with all key stakeholders in order to craft effective public policy.

The \$44½ million strategy included more than 60 initiatives designed to change the culture that has developed in Queensland, with a committed focus on preventing further deaths and violence. It was indeed a comprehensive plan for a complicated problem. We took the mature approach and worked to address individual responsibility rather than punishing the majority of people who do the right thing for the sins of a few. Why does this do-nothing government think the key success indicator of public policy is the quantum of money they simply throw at a problem and make blanket calls which penalise the majority of law-abiding citizens?

We need better governance, not more government. We covered a variety of issues which all contributed to the deep-seated issue growing within our culture—the issue of alcohol and drug related violence. We accepted these concerning incidents were not going away. Instead, sadly, they were becoming all too regular.

Unlike this do-nothing Labor government, our plan did not involve hitting the terminate button and killing the late-night hospitality industry in one swift move. Federal Labor almost killed the live cattle trade overnight and now this do-nothing Palaszczuk government has almost wiped out the late-night hospitality industry. The LNP had a multifaceted approach. It involved scanning and banning and harsher penalties for violence, along with education and coordinated safety initiatives. It has never been enough to simply put a bandaid on the wound when it is indeed a deep-seated injury.

The Labor government had only one simple plan—lock them out. The plan did not address the real issues—it did not address them at all—behind the violence on our streets. We have always believed that community safety must be a priority. However, as recent reporting has found, there is no hard evidence to show the introduction of a lockout would curb alcohol fuelled violence rather than simply move it.

The parliamentary committee originally raised this same concern with Labor's plan, questioning whether there was sufficient data to support this lukewarm approach and, as a result, was unable to report to parliament that this be passed. The first recommendation of the committee was to collect more data, stating there was little support from any quarter for the 1 am lockout proposal. Most interestingly and tellingly is the report upon which this government now basis this new bill. This report was completed before the lockout ever commenced.

The LNP learned when the Tackling Alcohol-Fuelled Violence Legislation Amendment Bill was debated in the House last year that the data used to justify the case was based on a Melbourne study, not a Queensland study, and was more than 15 years old. We are talking about the late 1990s. It did not specify a causal relationship between those hospitalisations listed and alcohol related violence. Essentially, the data was as relevant as an Olympian hopeful using time trials from the 2000 games to gain a position on the 2016 team.

Furthermore, Dr David Rosengren, Chair of the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine, confirmed at a public hearing that the data used was grossly flawed and there was a possibility that single improvements in measuring might be one contributing factor. While there were some reports on the supposed success of the Newcastle solution when the last bill was debated, many failed to acknowledge that assault rates in the Brisbane area were already 63 per cent lower than in Newcastle. Meanwhile, despite introducing severe restrictions, including a lockout in 2008, Newcastle was lagging behind the rest of New South Wales in reducing criminal assaults around licensed premises.

The early results of the LNP government's program were optimistic, with initial police data indicating that overall assaults had decreased by nine per cent. This was also coupled with sexual offences decreasing by 18 per cent, property damage decreasing by 10 per cent and drug offences detected by police decreasing by 26 per cent. This demonstrated that targeted intervention and a highly visible police presence was clearly improving the general safety of patrons who frequented Queensland's most popular nightspots.

What drives me as a politician is firstly to serve my Chatsworth community and then to assist with crafting good public policy. I acknowledge in my contribution to this debate that these were only preliminary results, with some elements of the Safe Night Out Strategy yet to commence.

As a complete package, the key elements of our strategy would have included, firstly and very importantly, compulsory drug and alcohol education in Queensland schools from years 7 to 12. Singularly, this important element would have seen our most influential Queenslanders taught about the effects of drugs and alcohol in a bid to see a cultural change flow through society. Secondly, we would have seen the establishment of 15 safe night precincts across Queensland to ensure popular nightclubs had coordinated provisions and support initiatives in place to keep patrons safe.

Thirdly, there would have been a new offence of unlawful striking causing death, which would carry a maximum penalty of life imprisonment and would require the offender to serve 80 per cent of his or her prison sentence. Queenslanders and visitors to our great state had to be aware that with actions there would be consequences.

Fourthly, we also looked at increasing penalties for other violent and antisocial offences. Fifthly, we looked at empowering police to issue banning orders. Sixthly, we looked at stronger and better coordinated action to ensure licensees provided a safe environment for their patrons. Finally, we looked at an awareness campaign, including advertising, to promote clear standards of responsible behaviour for patrons, licensees and police.

We believe the Safe Night Out Strategy should have been given a real chance to work given the time and consultation involved to put it together. I again congratulate the former member for Brisbane Central on the sterling work he did. Many on that side of the chamber could take a leaf out of his book. Success would not have come overnight, but as we have seen with other key public policy initiatives with attitudes towards smoking and drink-driving over time this integrated suite of policies may have had positive impacts.

Instead, we were given a bill which saw us looking at the history books for inspiration, ripped straight out of the days of prohibition. Just over two years ago the Labor Party won a protest vote and were given the precious gift of government. Why are they squandering this precious gift? The Palaszczuk government's approach to backflipping on lockout laws is another classic example. As Sir Winston Churchill once stated, 'It would be a great reform in politics if wisdom could be made to spread as easily and rapidly as folly.'