




Speech By  
**Samuel O'Connor**

**MEMBER FOR BONNEY**

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Record of Proceedings, 30 October 2018

**REVENUE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL; APPROPRIATION  
(PARLIAMENT) BILL (NO. 2); AND APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 2)**

 **Mr O'CONNOR** (Bonney—LNP) (2.57 pm): As part of the Economics and Governance Committee I was involved in the inquiries into the Revenue and Other Legislation Amendment Bill and the appropriation bills covering unforeseen expenditure. I thank my fellow members on the committee and the hardworking staff who, of course, do most of the leg work—especially Melissa who has done a fine and thorough job as the acting committee secretary and is now moving into another role.

In terms of the unforeseen expenditure of just over half a billion dollars, we have heard that close to half of it relates to accelerated state and Commonwealth funding for transport infrastructure, including the Bruce Highway upgrade and some other state roads. The Revenue and Other Legislation Bill was of particular interest given its wide scope. It contains a varied range of changes from expanding electronic conveyancing, requiring charities to include details of income and property, State Penalties Enforcement Registry changes to sort out technical issues and support a new service delivery model—with a debt of \$1.2 billion this is very important—bringing back the 'last claim standing' provision and some administrative changes to the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority Act as well as confirming the minister's authority to endorse compulsory land acquisitions for that project.

That last part was particularly surprising to me. I had made the mistake of assuming that a major transport project would fall under the realm of the Minister for Transport and Main Roads—although, on second thought, that is not likely given his record with rail. It could even be under the jurisdiction of the Minister for State Development, but I guess he is too busy practising the zingers he brings out in question time. Here it is though with the Deputy Premier, the member for South Brisbane.

Getting back to the other sections, I have some fantastic local not-for-profits in my electorate, including many around the precinct that we have in Arundel. In terms of the changes for charities, the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission told the committee that the requirement for specific wording in the bill will mean that Queensland charities will be out of step with those in other parts of the country as the template documents provided by the commission will differ. It is a real issue for the many charities that have adopted that template for their constitution.

The Nuga Nuga Aboriginal Corporation was strongly opposed to the changes that return the 'last claim standing' interpretation of 'native title party'. Their submission and a number of others raised concerns about the risks of putting parties with no proven connection to the land in a position to make decisions about the land. There will, however, be certainty for other submitters—corporations wanting to know which native party to engage with—but the opposing submitters claimed that the convenience for these corporations will override the intention of native title rights.

The bill also includes changes to try to tackle the huge problem of homemade alcohol by making a broader range of home-brew ingredients illegal in nine defined dry communities, which are the eight with alcohol management plans and Doomadgee. This would make it illegal in those communities to use things like yeast, fruit juice, sugar or fertilisers to make home-brew. They would, of course, still be able to be used for their usual purposes.

Throughout our inquiries a subcommittee comprising me and the members for Logan and Redlands visited Mornington Island. It was certainly the most remote part of our state that I have been to—up near the Northern Territory border in the Gulf of Carpentaria. It was a great turnout by the community up there and it shows how big of an issue this is. We were warmly welcomed by the local Indigenous people who have been the proud custodians of that land for over 65,000 years.

As I mentioned, Mornington Island is one of only eight communities in Queensland where alcohol is completely banned. They have not been allowed any for a decade and people have turned to dangerous homemade substitutes. These are highly toxic and lead to health and social issues. I am not being dramatic to say that this type of grog is tearing this island community apart. Anyone can get the ingredients. They are just things most people would have lying around the house. Because of that, they are really cheap as well. Even young kids on Mornington knew the recipe.

I support our committee's recommendation that turbo yeast be referred to separately as a substance and carry an offence to possess it. Turbo yeast is not something that is used for cooking. Currently, a person cannot be charged for possessing it and it can be easily bought online. This item needs to be specifically referred to and prohibited, but I note the Deputy Premier's response and explanation and thank her for considering this change.

Many of the residents up there want the bans lifted entirely. They told us how completely banning alcohol has made their substance abuse issues worse. We heard from Senior Sergeant Reilly, who provided an invaluable contribution as a local police officer to help define the importance of the notion of intent. She said it was not just about having vegemite or sugar at someone's house. No-one would get charged with that. If the police were to conduct a search and found a number of those items together, particularly if admissions were made towards what they were going to be used for, then charges could potentially be laid.

These laws may stop home-brew in its tracks completely, but many locals were worried about whether this may do more harm than good. They asked the question: what will people turn to instead? I spoke to a nurse who had recently returned after having last lived on the island before the alcohol restrictions came into place. She told me how she could not believe how much more prevalent illicit drug use had become in that time, particularly cannabis. Corinne Reading, one of the attendees at our public hearing, said to us—

Should it be successful—should we get rid of the home-brew—human nature, as in the past, means we will find alternatives ... we will get ice. There are already more marijuana smokers here. It is unrealistic to say that a whole township has to be 100 per cent sober ... You would not go to a town on the mainland like Townsville and say that 100 per cent of people are not allowed to drink at all ... Should you be successful in removing that, people will find an alternative.

I thank her for her contribution and it is incumbent on the government to heed that warning of what may come next and to prepare as best as possible for it.

One of the most vital things all members can do is to open up this House and engage with as many people as possible. Heading up to Mornington Island was incredibly important. We got to take a small part of the parliament to the people who will be directly impacted by the laws that we pass and to hear straight from them. I thank especially the parliament's Indigenous Liaison Officer, Brett Nutley, for helping to arrange the visit. He also endured sitting in the back of what was a very small plane on what was a fairly rough flight back to Cairns. On behalf of all members on that flight, I thank him for not losing his lunch.

Homemade alcohol is a huge issue and just one of the challenges that these remote Indigenous communities are facing, but they at least got to put their concerns directly to us. We need to deal with this crisis, but it is not enough to just pass these changes today. Communities were promised every positive outcome under the sun when these bans were brought in many years ago, and they are yet to realise the benefits of many of them.