




Speech By
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TRANSPORT LEGISLATION (ROAD SAFETY AND OTHER MATTERS) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms PUGH** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (6.17 pm): Despite our best efforts, the road toll is still too high. It is too high for families, for communities and for Queensland. The economic cost to Queensland is \$5 billion per year, but you cannot put a price on the grief of a family and a community. The Queensland strategy sets a high bar to clear: to reduce road deaths by 30 per cent by the year 2020. This is an incredibly ambitious target, but there are significant challenges to meet this goal. Despite our best collective efforts to cut the drink-driving rate, in the five years to 31 December 2017, 25 per cent of drivers involved in fatal crashes had a mid-range blood alcohol reading. Currently, this significant cohort of drivers is not subject to alcohol interlock devices. I am pleased to say that this legislation fixes that.

The current legislation does not require people convicted of drink-driving offences to complete an intervention or education program. Research has shown that brief intervention programs delivered to first-time drink-driving offenders are successful; furthermore, so are long education programs targeted at repeat offenders. Amendments in the bill aim to enhance road safety by increasing participation in re-education programs, improving the outcomes of the alcohol interlock policy and, ideally, playing a key role in reducing the rate of alcohol fuelled car crashes.

It is worth framing these important changes in the context of the bigger picture and our national conversation around alcohol. We need to examine why, despite significant education programs, we as a country and as a state still have such a large problem with drink-driving and drinking in general. Every weekend our emergency rooms are filled with people injured while drinking, injured while driving, injured while fighting and succumbing to alcohol poisoning, not to mention its terrible social impacts.

Despite the significant damage we know alcohol does in our community in many different ways, the Morrison government has recently released a watered-down version of the draft national alcohol strategy. The Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education has released a report into the National Alcohol Strategy and has raised some serious concerns. Their concerns run to the fact that the alcohol lobby have had significant input into the strategy to the point where their report is called *Alcohol industry fingerprints: analysis of modifications to the national alcohol strategy*. I want to read from their report about alcohol in the Australian culture. The report states—

The strategy has been modified to re-frame alcohol consumption as a positive part of Australian culture. This is closely in line with alcohol industry rhetoric, but is at odds with the objective of the strategy which is to minimise harm from alcohol.

The revised strategy says—

Alcohol is an intrinsic part of Australian culture and it plays a central role in most people's ... lives. Research clearly illustrates that whether people are celebrating, socialising, networking, relaxing, commiserating, or rewarding themselves—alcohol plays an integral role.

The report talks about 'the framing of alcohol consumption'. It states—

The alcohol industry deliberately uses positive and pro-drinking terms that are strategically ambiguous and avoid discussion of the actual amount of alcohol being consumed. Classic examples of this are 'moderate drinking' and 'responsible drinking'. The revised strategy includes a new sentence: "According to the Guidelines, many drinkers consume alcohol responsibly". References to 'responsible drinkers' and the 'responsible majority' are made frequently, and almost exclusively, by the alcohol industry. The Guidelines do not use this terminology; in fact, they refer to the fact that 'responsible drinking' means different things to different people. Indeed, evidence shows that the majority of people who drink above the Guidelines consider themselves 'responsible drinkers'.

What is really concerning is this part in the report that states—

The alcohol industry relies on its heaviest consumers for the vast majority of its profit; 20 per cent of the adult population (nearly four million Australians) drink 74 per cent of all the alcohol consumed in Australia. These 'super' consumers are drinking on average 4.21 standard drinks a day, which is twice the maximum amount listed in the Guidelines to reduce long term harm. If these people consumed within the Guidelines, it would equate to a 39 per cent reduction in alcohol production and sales.

Madam Deputy Speaker McMillan, I do not know about you but that last statistic—that 74 per cent of alcohol is consumed by 20 per cent of drinkers—seems to me to be the Pareto principle with a cruel twist. We know that excessive alcohol consumption contributes to diabetes, many different kinds of cancers, sleep problems and so much more. There are few health conditions that it does not contribute to. We as a community and as a government need to have the courage to be clear with the community about what constitutes a safe level of alcohol consumption. That means numbers, that means data and that means normalising safe levels of drinking and even abstinence.

I am a product of my generation and I vividly remember the campaign from the early nineties: 'If you drink and drive, you're a bleep bleep.' The last two words are unparliamentary, I am afraid, but I think all members know the campaign I am alluding to. I grew up understanding that it is unsafe to drink and drive. In this job, I am offered a lot of drinks and I also have to drive.

This year I made the decision not to drink at all so I have not had a drink in eight months. What I have really noticed is people's reactions. I have noticed that it is far more notable to abstain from alcohol than it is to overindulge. Also, I have never been asked so much in my life if I am expecting. I am expecting to set a good example for my kids, to make sure I am never over the limit when I drive and to help be part of a new and positive discussion about what safe and healthy drinking looks like. I know that there are many of us in the House today who would know somebody who fits in the 20 per cent of people who consume 70 per cent of all alcohol consumed in Australia. This legislation creates a vital intervention point for those people, and I commend it to the House.