




Speech By
Lance McCallum

MEMBER FOR BUNDAMBA

Record of Proceedings, 25 May 2023

COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND SERVICES COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr McCALLUM** (Bundamba—ALP) (3.29 pm): I would like to begin my contribution on this committee report by acknowledging and congratulating the work of the Community Support and Services Committee in looking into the issues that are the subject of this report. I particularly acknowledge the leadership and hard work of the chair of the committee, the member for Mansfield.

Given that Queensland is the final jurisdiction to consider the decriminalisation of certain offences in the Summary Offences Act, which is the subject of this report, it is a conversation and an inquiry that we should be having. The issue needs to be looked at and there does need to be a very reasonable, considered, balanced inquiry that is based on evidence. Congratulations to the committee because I think that the report that is now before the Assembly reflects exactly that approach.

It is a comprehensive report. The committee met with police and people supporting persons experiencing homelessness. They consulted with people who are involved in our safe night precincts and entertainment districts in metropolitan areas and with people working in diversionary centres and detox centres, as well as advocates from the First Nations community, local council representatives and of course the broader community.

As has been reflected in other members' contributions, this report has stated that a balance needs to be struck between a health and welfare response and community safety and the community's ability to have enjoyment of public spaces. We also need to make sure—and this is the nub of the issue for me—that vulnerable people are not going to be subjected to institutionalised or negative outcomes that come with an institution that includes laws that can send them on a downward spiral.

I think one of the most compelling examples of exactly that—and it is contained in this report—is the research that shows the very strong correlation between people who are in custody for intoxication. I would hasten to add that this report looks at peaceful intoxication, if I can put it that way, and the higher risk that the person will die in custody because they are there due to intoxication. That is overwhelmingly, based on the evidence, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It is very clear that, as well as saving lives, there are overall benefits to society by diverting people away from the criminal justice system towards a pathway of recovery, diversion and greater wellbeing.

I am particularly happy to see recommendation 8 in the report. I support all 16 recommendations and what they are trying to achieve. Recommendation 8 deals with encouraging local governments to ensure the provision of adequate public facilities across the state and that cultural gatherings be provided with public facilities including shade, waste bins, seating, fresh drinking water and amenities. The report also points out that local governments have a role to play when it comes to the regulation around the criminalisation of some of these offences. It is very important that other levels of government also step up and have this conversation and consider what is in this report. I commend the report to the House.