




Speech By  
**James Lister**

**MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS**

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Record of Proceedings, 2 May 2024

## **CRIMINAL CODE (DECRIMINALISING SEX WORK) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (3.31 pm): I, too, rise to make a brief contribution on the Criminal Code (Decriminalising Sex Work) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. I associate myself with the comments of other LNP speakers and, in particular, the shadow Attorney-General, Tim Nicholls, who spoke earlier in the debate. There are two particular things I would like to address. The first is the apparent absence of regulation that we would see if the government has its way with this particular bill. Our concern is based on the propensity for prostitution businesses to be in and around a criminal element imposed on the operators. I can regale the House with a case from my electorate. Unlawful prostitution was going on in a flat in a residential area. There were comings and goings of people some of whom appeared, in my opinion, to have been coercing the sex worker involved. It was a very frightening thing. To see an absence of regulation in this space would be a backward step for the safety of sex workers and the community generally.

I bring the attention of the House to Fitzgerald who had something to say about this. We are talking about comment made in an era when there was no regulation. Prostitution was banned but it was everywhere. Great spoils were being made by corrupt police and criminals who were working together at the expense and to the disadvantage of the sex workers involved.

What springs to mind is that people who live in the community may have an expectation that they have some say over whether or not a prostitution business operates near their home or their business. In its submission, the Queensland Hotels Association was very clear about this. I think this goes to the matter of property rights in that individual business operators should be able to decide what activities they allow to operate in their premises.

In his 1989 report, Commissioner Fitzgerald said—

Brothel customers include drunk and unruly people, who come and go at all hours, disrupting the neighbourhood of the brothel and posing a nuisance and a hazard to residents.

Prostitution is often associated with other crime. Competitors resort to violence for territorial or financial gain, whereas “clients” in positions of influence are ripe targets for blackmail and extortion.

I think it would be remiss of the House to disregard the words of Commissioner Fitzgerald. He certainly had a very thorough exposure to the disadvantages of the completely unregulated environment that persisted up until the end of the eighties.

I will be joining with my LNP opposition colleagues in opposing this bill, not because we have any objection to the sex workers themselves. We do want them to have safety at work. However, we feel that those who own properties have a right to have a say in how they are used and who they live next to. In addition, we fear that an absence of regulation may result in the re-emergence of crime—extortion, coercion, drugs and so on—that would be to the detriment of society broadly and to the sex workers themselves.