



Speech by

**Andrew Cripps**

**MEMBER FOR HINCHINBROOK**

Hansard Tuesday, 4 August 2009

---

## **MOTION: REFERRAL TO LAW, JUSTICE AND SAFETY COMMITTEE**

**Mr CRIPPS** (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (10.24 am): Since the Premier issued a press release on 20 July 2009 indicating her intention to establish an inquiry into alcohol related violence and the causes of that violence, I have followed with interest the media commentary and public comment by the Premier on this issue. My interest in this issue is based on the fact that the Premier indicated an intention to establish an inquiry by way of referral to the Law, Justice and Safety Committee.

Today is 4 August. For the last 15 days media outlets across the state have carried stories, mostly quoting the Premier and the Minister for Tourism and Fair Trading, outlining what the government intends to do to crack down on this issue of glass being used as a weapon in licensed premises and other matters related to this problem. It is undoubtedly an important issue. I am the deputy chairman of that committee. For the last 15 days I have been hearing from the Premier about what the Law, Justice and Safety Committee will be doing in relation to this matter.

Until today there has not been any referral or any terms of reference, but there has been plenty of commentary about what my committee will be doing. This concerns me as it effectively pre-empts the work of the Law, Justice and Safety Committee and any recommendations that it makes. For example, in the press release issued by the Premier on 20 July the Premier makes the following comments—

There's been a fundamental breakdown among young people in respect for themselves and each other and this is something that has to be addressed through this planned Inquiry.

I think it is unfortunate and a concern that the Premier described the inquiry as 'planned'. A planned inquiry does not have the capacity to pursue these matters unfettered by preconceived expectations of what the government has pre-empted the results of the findings may be. The press release goes on to say—

Ms Bligh said the Inquiry would engage with community leaders, educators and law enforcement and medical professionals as well as Liquor Licensing and the hotels industry.

"It will work closely with the hospitality industry to identify harm and risk minimisation practices that could be put in place to further reduce major incidents at venues.

"This could include increased security, conditional licenses, reduced service of some alcohol types and education campaigns.

Indeed, in an article in *The Gold Coast Bulletin* on 25 July the Premier stated that her government will ban glass from problem and high-risk pubs and clubs throughout Queensland; that her government will work with the police, health experts, the hotel industry, liquor licensing and community leaders to tackle alcohol related violence and antisocial behaviour; and that she has initiated a parliamentary inquiry to examine these issues and report back to Queenslanders by the end of the year. So will the Premier's government or will the parliamentary inquiry be undertaking this process?

It would appear that the Premier has extensive and well-developed ideas about what her intentions and those of her government are in relation to this issue. The potential for this scenario to occur was flagged by members of the opposition during the debate on the Parliament of Queensland Amendment Bill in May this year. The development of these new committees on broadly based policy areas has diverted attention away from the committee system, providing a role focused on scrutiny of various areas of

government activity. The Premier clearly has well-informed and extensive views on what her government will do in relation to glass in licensed premises that are considered to be high-risk venues. Yet the use of glass in licensed premises forms part of the referral motion moved by the Leader of the House. What is there left to be considered by the Law, Justice and Safety Committee that the Premier has not already canvassed in her extensive public comments issued over the past 15 days?

On page 5 of issue 296 of the *City News* magazine published on 30 July was an article titled 'Valley venues may avoid ban'. It states that the Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing is introducing glass bans for up to 70 CBD and Fortitude Valley pubs and clubs deemed to be high risk due to their 3 am or 5 am liquor licences. The article goes on to say that glasses will be replaced by the end of the year after a parliamentary inquiry into alcohol fuelled violence.

In the same article the Minister for Tourism and Fair Trading is quoted as saying that each venue will be judged on a case by case basis with individual measures including plastic cups tailored to suit and that while a number of venues are considered to be high risk due to such things as opening hours, a common-sense approach will be taken in the implementation of the new changes. The views and the intentions of the Minister for Tourism and Fair Trading are spelt out clearly in relation to what will happen in the future when, at that time, the Law, Justice and Safety Committee had not even seen the terms of reference flagged by the Premier on 20 July. People could be forgiven for thinking that the minds of the Premier and the minister were made up and that the intended course of action of the government is already determined.

According to the Premier's second reading speech on the Parliament of Queensland Amendment Bill, the proposed new structure of the Queensland parliamentary committee system was designed to create a system more focused on developing best practice policy and legislative solutions for the issues facing Queenslanders. Far from developing best practice policy and legislative solutions, we have a government whose intentions and predetermined course of action on this matter have been outlined over the last 15 days. It does not appear that the views of the government will be influenced or informed by the findings of the Law, Justice and Safety Committee. I express concern about the government's attitude, which appears to take the role of parliamentary committees for granted.