

**ALCOHOL-RELATED HARM — PILBARA**

*Grievance*

**MR K.J.J. MICHEL (Pilbara)** [9.30 am]: I direct my grievance to the Minister for Racing and Gaming, Hon Paul Papalia. It is no secret that the alleviation of alcohol-related harm is a tough and complex issue that faces many electorates in Western Australia. Many members across our state recognise the importance of solving this issue through working alongside the department and the director of Liquor Licensing. The Pilbara faces unique challenges in alleviating alcohol-related harm. It has thus far suffered through a patchwork of liquor restrictions across different locations and jurisdictions, with restrictions varying between Port Hedland, Karratha and other towns. I am conscious that the community as a whole does not have confidence that this is working and that it will work in the longer term to ensure that licensees do not continue to suffer and the general community is not restricted. I emphasise that the general community is not restricted.

As the minister is well aware, alcohol-related harm refers to the abuse of alcohol that has a significant impact on the rate of domestic violence, child abuse, crime and antisocial behaviour, which in some areas is prolific. The reality is that alcohol-related domestic assaults in the Pilbara were seven times the metropolitan rate and just under double the regional rate when they were measured in 2016. Alcohol is also a factor in a high proportion of suicides in the area. Alcohol-related hospitalisations are significantly higher than the corresponding state rate for Port Hedland and South Hedland and, according to the Department of Communities, most family and domestic violence referrals that it deals with involving the safety of children are alcohol-abuse related. In my electorate of Pilbara and in the other remote areas of the state, I recognise the concerted effort by the authorities, police, government and local communities to tackle the social issues that the misuse of alcohol causes. One of these issues is the practice of sly grogging. This is a harmful and illegal practice whereby people buy large quantities of liquor from areas with no restrictions and drive significant distances to sell it at an inflated price in prescribed areas, often to at-risk and vulnerable members of the community. Unfortunately, the alleviation of alcohol-related harm is a complex issue. Not one policy can solve these issues and interdepartmental coordination is vital in tackling these issues. For me, alleviating this problem is a priority. The people of Pilbara have engaged with me many times about this issue. With long-term foresight, I want to help implement policies that will alleviate these issues without negatively impacting on responsible drinking in the Pilbara. I am proud to see that the budget includes measures that will help to reduce alcohol-related harm, including \$12.8 million to continue the north west drug and alcohol support program and \$14.8 million towards a step up, step down mental health facility in Karratha.

I congratulate Minister Paul Papalia for introducing the Liquor Control Amendment Bill 2018 and I commend his ability to engage effectively with his constituents on issues that involve alcohol. I believe that through coordination with the minister and the director of Liquor Licensing, we will be successful in implementing policies with long-term foresight that will alleviate alcohol-related harm without negatively affecting responsible drinking in the Pilbara. My question to the minister is: what measures and policies will the minister's department introduce to reduce alcohol-related harm?

**MR P. PAPALIA (Warnbro — Minister for Racing and Gaming)** [9.35 am]: I thank the member for his grievance. I note the member's concerns about the harm inflicted on his community as a consequence of the inappropriate use of alcohol and also his advocacy on behalf of the far greater proportion of the community who drink responsibly and those liquor outlets that act in a responsible manner and aspire to as reasonable a management of liquor licensing as can be achieved. I am aware that the member is receiving some contact and advocacy on behalf of liquor stores and other packaged-liquor outlets with regard to a submission made by the Western Australia Police Force in January 2017 seeking the imposition of further restrictions on the availability of alcohol in Port Hedland because of high levels of alcohol-related harm being experienced in the community. Subsequently, he would be aware that WA police provided an addendum to its Port Hedland report, calling for Pilbara-wide restrictions, and that, doubtless, has caused some degree of concern amongst his small business community that is involved in packaged-liquor sales. The director has not yet made a determination on this request. Therefore, I cannot really comment. It is an independent process. The director's consideration of section 64 applications and response to those is independent of me and the government; therefore, it is not appropriate that I comment.

However, I will make some response to the member's request for information about what the government is planning to do about Pilbara-wide alcohol management. Under the priority area of tackling alcohol and drugs under the whole-of-government response to the West Pilbara trauma response plan, we have identified liquor controls and restrictions as a necessary component of that response. The West Pilbara trauma response plan, members may be aware, is a whole-of-government response to that horrible situation identified particularly in Roebourne and surrounds in which young children were being assaulted. The Minister for Community Services is leading an across-government response to that, as is necessary, to achieve better outcomes. The plan will address

not only the significant damage caused by alcohol, but also the underlying services that are crucial to healing those who are vulnerable to the inappropriate use of alcohol. As the member has already pointed out, huge physical and mental issues are being experienced by people in the Pilbara and its surrounds, including domestic violence, assaults and children suffering from neglect, abuse and a lack of education. We are focused on addressing those issues and part of our response will involve looking at different ways of managing alcohol sales. I have to place on the record that I am supportive of the director of Liquor Licensing and their role to decide, based on evidence from police and other health experts, what is best for the community at the time of the decision. But as there are individual applications in different locations across the state, I agree that the consequence is a patchwork response in many respects to the management of alcohol. There is an opportunity for us to achieve a more targeted and focused response. I will be exploring that in the process of developing the liquor licensing response to the West Pilbara trauma and healing plan. We will be looking at a robust banned drinkers register combined with takeaway alcohol management systems, and also exploring the use of modern technology to ensure that we get something different from what has been experienced in this state to date.

In some locations they have tried banned drinking registers and takeaway alcohol management systems, but it has been done using less than modern methodologies and without accessing the full benefits of technologies that are available to us today. We will explore these in our response to the entire West Pilbara plan. Very shortly we will go to Roebourne, Karratha, Port Hedland and other areas of the Pilbara with the member for Pilbara, the member for Mining and Pastoral Region and other members to discuss what we hope to do with licensees, local community authorities, key stakeholders and people in the community. Whatever we come up with will be as a consequence of a collaborative, consultative approach. We will very much include the small businesses associated with sales of packaged liquor. Whatever we do will have an impact on their businesses, and we care about them. I am also the small business minister and the tourism minister. I have an interest beyond just managing liquor, in whatever process we develop. Of course we will be right up-front at the outset, in the early stages, and we will seek advice and comment, particularly from the Aboriginal communities that we are trying to assist, but also from the wider community. We will seek their views and support for whatever we ultimately end up developing and implementing. It will work only in the event that it is supported by the wider community.

With respect to the member's observations about sly grogging, as he knows there are provisions in the Liquor Control Amendment Bill 2018 that specifically target sly grogging. His electorate of Pilbara will benefit from the implementation of that legislation. I look forward to that bill passing through the upper house in the very near term so that we can bring all the benefits associated with the Liquor Control Act amending legislation to the entire community, including the Pilbara.