

LIQUOR CONTROL AMENDMENT (PROTECTED ENTERTAINMENT PRECINCTS) BILL 2022

Committee

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting. The Chair of Committees (Hon Martin Aldridge) in the chair; Hon Stephen Dawson (Minister for Emergency Services) in charge of the bill.

Clause 1: Short title —

Committee was interrupted after the clause had been partly considered.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I will talk about a couple of things in relation to the earlier debate. I was asked what the advertising campaign might look like. I am advised that it is still being worked on. It could well be about shining a spotlight, as a deterrent, on the laws. It may well be about encouraging families and the community to return to the areas, because many families have decided to stay out of places like Northbridge because of the violence. The advisers are not in a position to tell me what might be spent on the campaign, but, as I indicated previously, information will be found on the website. Flyers will be available in licensed premises to make sure that people using those premises will know about the new laws and that penalties will exist.

The member asked how the regime will be assessed for effectiveness. I do not have much more to say on this other than it may well be assessed by the number of visitors to the area, an increased vibrancy, a growth in business, a greater perception of community safety, a growing culture of fun, not fear, that attracts families, fewer incidents of violence and antisocial behaviour and more people enjoying the precincts. It is a protective measure that is built on existing mechanisms within the Liquor Control Act, but expands those to public areas.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: The advertising campaign —

Hon Stephen Dawson: By way of interjection, I do not think we are going to see ads on the television during the news, 14 ads saying —

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: It is not in the minister's portfolio. It will not be him who makes that decision. I have admitted to a somewhat cynical nature, so I will be watching into the future —

Hon Stephen Dawson: It is a Thursday afternoon and you are prone to be more cynical on a Thursday.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: I am prone to be more cynical on a Thursday; that is absolutely true. I know it is hard to believe. The bar is set fairly high already. I will keep an eye on the advertising campaign to see how that proceeds and whether the government will spruik how it is keeping the public safe. I can just imagine that happening throughout 2024, in particular, in the lead-up to the next election. However, far be it from me —

Hon Stephen Dawson: You are being very cynical.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: — to give in to my more cynical side.

I am happy to give other members a bit of a shot before we finish tonight, but I come back to the point made by Hon Wilson Tucker and my very careful disagreement with Hon Peter Collier about the numbers. If this is focused very much on a small number of high recidivist individuals, I would expect to see some change. If we could get the individual data down to a precinct level—I accept that the existing data is more likely to be broader than that—even if the changes were small, it would be worth having baseline and follow-up numbers to give us some indication about the effectiveness of the intent, because the intent is to reduce antisocial and violent behaviour. Hon Peter Collier is absolutely right that there will still be significant violent events, one-punch events and antisocial behaviour, because in some circumstances those people who come in to do that will not have hit the register as yet. They will not be on the horizon for police and, obviously, if it is their first time, they will not be on the original record. I would have thought, therefore, that those baselines could potentially be met. It would then be interesting to test whether those numbers change.

I will stop harping on about it in a minute because I want to make the point, and then I will sit down and let it go, but I always like to see the quantifiable data in relation to these things. My unbidden and unrequested advice to the government is that I think this would be made easier if the government could baseline this. I put on the record as the opposition person managing the bill that if we get to one, two or three years down the track and the changes are remarkably small, but the anecdotal feedback from the community is that it feels like a safer place, I am fully happy to accept that that is a reasonable outcome. That may well be the case. That would address the significant concerns raised by Hon Tjorn Sibma that this is very much about, dare I say, the vibe of the place. That dates me, but it is the ambience of places like Northbridge et cetera. I fully accept that that is the intent, the government wants to change that and that would bring people in.

Another metric we might use for success, which I am not sure how a government would do, is usage patterns. The minister might be able to tell us at some point next week, but I am not sure whether usage patterns could be measured to see whether there is a shift in patronage. All of that would help. I do not want to put a massive burden

of compliance on government, and I will talk about oversight and compliance later down the track and next week, but if the government has a measurable metric that it could use, and I suspect it could, I would expect to see a little change at least. Bearing in mind we support what the government is doing, what we are proposing to do will hopefully see a bigger change in the metric that relates to patronage and enjoyment of those areas. Some of that, I accept, will be anecdotal. I still think it is worth chasing. It is worth having to ultimately measure success. As I said, because the government is targeting hopefully a small number of high recidivist people, I imagine the metrics on those will be the easiest part to meet. This will be my question, because Hon Dr Brad Pettitt wants to ask a question before we finish.

In terms of the oversight, will the minister report to Parliament the number of people for whom exclusion notices are put in place and those sorts of usage numbers? Will there be a reporting metric at that base level? Before the minister answers, I will just say that I think the more baseline data that can be put in place and can be measured without tying down the resources to an impossible point, the more support the government will get for legislation that will have its critics. It will not be the opposition or the government, but it will come from elsewhere and they might actually support their argument. I am here to help. I am trying to make it better. The minister might be in a position to make that a better outcome.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I have to be honest; I have forgotten where that conversation started. I will go to the end of it. I am very happy to say that the department is very happy to provide the information about the openness and transparency around it. That is probably best answered through a Parliamentary question at some stage in the future but can soon be provided. I can tell the member that, at the moment, there are 345 barring notices in place and 327 prohibition orders. I am also happy to advise that the aforementioned Professor Miller, whom I think Hon Dr Brad Pettitt spoke about in relation to the Sydney lockouts—did he talk about that?

Hon Dr Brad Pettitt interjected.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: The Queensland lockouts. Professor Miller is currently doing some work to review the effectiveness of barring notices and prohibition orders in Western Australia. The early advice has not been peer-reviewed yet but it indicates they are having a positive impact in Northbridge. That is good. As I said, my advisers tell me that it is yet to be peer reviewed, but it is Professor Miller who is undertaking that work. I hope that answers the members' questions.

Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT: I want to go back to where I started my questioning today because I did not quite finish asking about some of the groups that were consulted. This letter was sent to me yesterday; it is one that I have tabled. It was signed by the WA Council of Social Services, Community Legal WA, Youth Affairs Council of WA, Community Legal WA, WA Network of Alcohol and other Drug Agencies, WA Association for Mental Health, ConnectGroups, WA Justice Association, Justice Reform Initiative, and Social Reinvestment WA. In this letter, they state that they wrote to Minister Buti, Minister Papalia and the Premier on 11 October to express their concerns and request a briefing to discuss them further. They go on to say —

Our correspondence was referred to Minister Buti, and we did not receive a response from his office.

If that is correct, why was there no response from Minister Buti's office? Have any of those above groups been briefed and, more importantly, were they consulted in the construction of this legislation?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I cannot comment on whether or why the minister whose legislation this is has not responded to a piece of correspondence. The member will have to take that up with that person. Neither I nor my advisers know whether a response has indeed been provided because this was dated 23 November. The member tabled this yesterday and I am not sure whether a response has been issued since then.

The advisers at the table cannot advise me whether any of these organisations have been consulted. To their knowledge, they have not, but we can check to see whether the minister's office has had any conversations with these groups and I can provide that information next Tuesday.

The CHAIR: Members, noting the time, I am going to interrupt debate to report progress.

Progress reported and leave granted to sit again, pursuant to standing orders.