

WEDNESDAY, 30 SEPTEMBER 2009

LEADERS' STATEMENTS

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kilburn): I call the Youth Premier.

YOUTH PREMIER: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. Professor Richard Wiseman has devised a test to tell whether you are a lucky person. Professor Wiseman can tell if you are lucky or unlucky just by handing you a newspaper and asking you to count the number of photographs in its pages. Some people finish the job in a few seconds while others need a couple of minutes to tally all of the pictures. The reason for the difference is not that some people are better counters than others. Rather, the secret lies on page 2 of the newspaper where Wiseman has inserted a huge message in one-inch letters: 'Stop counting! There are 43 photographs in this newspaper.' Believe it or not, many people actually miss this enormous headline in the newspaper. They are too busy counting photographs to notice. The giant message is not a trick. There really are 43 pictures in the paper. Professor Wiseman has found that if you see the announcement right away you tend to be a lucky person, open to random opportunities. By contrast, if you do not spot it you are usually an unlucky person, more likely to miss out on fortuitous possibilities. I believe there is a simpler test. One need only look to the people in this chamber to find lucky people. We are here during this term as youth with a youth voice seeking change for youth. We truly are lucky to have this opportunity.

There are some things that we should be focusing on as a Youth Parliament. I believe that we can break it down to four points: we need to be constantly learning; we need to be empowered; we need to be united; and we need to be actually achieving change. Let us start with education and learning. I am somewhat concerned with a parliament that believes that it does not have anything more to learn. We will not be such a parliament. We can even learn from some of the most unlikely places. I have a young cousin named Douglas. Back when I was a young boy, Douglas and I were out camping under the stars. I pointed up into the sky and said, 'Doug, you see those stars? Every one of those is a sun very similar to our own.' My younger cousin looked up at me and said, 'Tom, you know, those stars often have solar systems all around them, just like our own.' I can tell you that that was not the response I was expecting. It is quite amazing in that I found that I really learned a lot from that experience. Many of our number are new members to the House. This parliamentary term will be a fantastic opportunity to gain a better understanding of the political process, to see how we can take an idea to law. Likewise, many of us only know each other as a result of being members of this parliament. We can learn a lot from each other in the time that we have. I encourage you to take this opportunity to just strike up a conversation with someone you do not know so well. It is amazing what you can learn from the experience.

Empowering—during this parliamentary term there will be many opportunities to be involved. I can sum this up in one statement: get amongst it! Repeat after me: get amongst it! 'Be a gangster' is one of the terms that we were talking about earlier in the day. Take these opportunities and be empowered by them. We can also empower others, not just ourselves. We need to be a parliament that supports each other. It can even be a member who is not on our side of the House. A simple, 'Great speech, mate!' and just a pat on the back can really go a long way in boosting someone's confidence. I am fond of a particular quote on this issue. I think it is an excellent quote—

I expect to pass through this world but once. Any good thing therefore that I can do or any kindness that I can show to any fellow creature, let me do it now. Let me not defer nor neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again.

There are many young people in Queensland who are struggling to be empowered. Depression is a very real issue for many young Queenslanders. We can give these Queenslanders a voice and attempt to empower them. I know this is an issue very close to the heart of some members of the House. I look forward to hearing these members elaborate on this point when they get the chance to make their own voice heard.

United and being united—there is a real great diversity in this parliament. We are here united under our respective government and opposition as well as the parliament. We have university students, high school students and nonstudents from a wide range of areas. These areas involve subjects of study and age right through to geographical location. Queensland covers almost two million square kilometres. We are the second largest state in this great country. It is a lot of room for diversity, and I believe that this parliament is very representative of that diversity.

Now to change, to being a parliament about change. Change in recent times has been a term that has been snatched by many world leaders. I believe that change is not enough. Change we all can believe in is not enough. What is enough, you ask? We must focus on change for strength. I encourage all members to make the most of this opportunity and make this the best Youth Parliament that we can make it. Thank you.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I call the Youth Leader of the Opposition.

YOUTH LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION: Before we begin, I would like to apologise in advance to my colleagues for revisiting an issue we flogged to death this morning. While I enjoy living here, it must be acknowledged that Queensland has always been Australia's most peculiar state. As our southern neighbours see it, we have the climate of California yet the mentality of Alabama. Queensland has worked hard to maintain its reputation over the years by imprisoning its 17-year-olds and for protecting the curtains from the evils of daylight saving and the fading that comes as a result of it. But nowhere is it more pronounced than in this parliament. I believe now is as good a time as any to take a serious look at the way we conduct our politics in this state and consider major parliamentary and electoral reforms.

My first proposal concerns the room down that hall. Queensland is the only Australian state which has a unicameral parliament. Our upper house, the Legislative Council, was abolished in an act of suicide in 1922 and has remained so ever since. The Legislative Council in my opinion was rightly abolished at the time because it was an appointed body that served the interests of a privileged few by obstructing the popular impulses of the time expressed by this chamber, the Legislative Assembly. A former member of this chamber Denis Murphy once described the upper house's abolition as the end of the dominance of wealth and power over the Queensland parliament. Unfortunately, over the last 80 years this has led to a culture of authoritarian governments of all political stripes which has been exacerbated by unusually long tenures of office.

Unlike the federal and other state parliaments, Queensland has no escape from the 'winner takes all' legislative process. The reality is that, unless there is the rare occurrence of a minority government, non-government MPs have no meaningful contribution to legislation and rely entirely on the mercies of the government to pass bills. The solution to this problem lies down that hall. After eight decades, there is proof enough that unicameralism is far from perfect. What I propose is for an elected Legislative Council, partially based on the federal Senate, to be re-established and that both houses learn from the faults of the pre-1922 parliament and the events ever since.

The exact nature of such a reform should be for the Queensland people to decide, but here is my proposal: the Legislative Council shall have roughly half the numbers of this chamber, around 40, elected as a state-wide multimember electorate using the same proportional representation method employed by the Australian Senate. Like the Senate, the Legislative Council shall be a house of review to provide the checks and balances to the government without interfering with the stability of the lower house. The new upper house should clearly be denied the ability to affect in any way the budget bills or confidence motions to ensure the primacy of the lower house's role as the people's house. The proportional representation system will mean that a diverse range of views and minority parties will gain access to decision-making processes and prevent legislation from being steamrolled through parliament by a government without adequate debate. This simply means better and more democratic policy making, especially if the upper house develops an effective committee system like the federal Senate. I propose that both houses of parliament be simultaneously elected for four-year terms. This will ensure that the upper house must have an electoral mandate which is contemporary to the lower house and therefore can have some right to obstruct bills.

Once we adopt such a system that is comparable to every other state, I next propose that the Queensland government lobby their interstate counterparts through COAG to synchronise the electoral systems of all the other states to have a single day every four years for all state elections in Australia, just as it is done in the United States. This could reclaim the relevance of the states by making them more responsive to issues, forcing state political parties to coordinate policies on issues like the Murray River. In closing, wouldn't it be nice to prove to our snooty southern neighbours that they are wrong and by leading the way with a comprehensive democratic reform program? Thank you.

MOTION

Alcohol Related Violence

YOUTH DEPUTY PREMIER, by leave, without notice: I move—

That this YMCA Queensland Youth Parliament supports the introduction of a range of initiatives to reduce the levels of alcohol related violence in Queensland and its impact on young people.

Alcohol and violence. Alcoholics, nondrinkers, social drinkers, binge drinkers, drunk drivers, under-age drinkers: whoever you are, however much you drink, we have all seen the effects of alcohol related violence. Let us look at the realities. We are a desensitised nation. Through CS/, through the news and through live autopsies on TV, we are realistically desensitised to violence. But it is not just the horrors of violence that we are desensitised to. There is actually a voyeuristic nature in violence these days. Think about it: 'Bring back the biff'. That is a popular phrase that we all smile and laugh about, but really what is it encouraging? Cheering on fights is generally accepted. Look at our football culture. Our

national heroes cause full stadiums to roar and cheer in support of a fight that is going on below. We have people sitting at home watching on TV getting all passionate about men who got caught up in the moment over a game of football.

Even in schools, crowds gather when children are fighting, and sometimes even parents join in. The idea of violence, public brawls and so on is entrenched in the drinking paradigm of Australian society. The relationship between alcohol and violence is unequivocal. If you look at high-alcohol activities you will see that the incidence of violence increases as well. Schoolies is a perfect example. As such, no problem related to violence and alcohol or health and safety which is affected by those things can ever be addressed until the use of alcohol is entirely reconceptualised.

As it stands, the general public says that drinking in moderation is the key. As it stands, the public says that binge drinking, excessive drinking, being 'para' and the behaviour that it encourages is not appropriate behaviour. As it stands, the general public says that violence under the influence of alcohol is unacceptable. However, come Friday and Saturday night, up to 60,000 people from Queensland in the Valley alone from that same general public are those same people. Here is the hypocrisy that is inherent not just in our state but Australian society as a whole. Getting off your face is not an acceptable way to behave in society. The reality is that excessive drinking is drug abuse. It is the one drug that, by law, Australians can and will abuse. I say it again: excessive alcohol consumption is drug abuse.

Let us look at who is to blame. We are in an era of no accountability. We have parents who blame teachers for not disciplining their children. We have teachers complaining to the government that they cannot discipline these children and they cannot do their job, and then we have the government saying, 'What can we do?' No-one is accountable. But the reality is that we are all accountable—every single one of us. It is not enough for teachers to teach us about drinking and safety two weeks before schoolies. That may be the case but, more importantly, it is every parent's responsibility to teach appropriate alcohol consumption. It is only in the home that lifetime habits can be learned. If parents are truly concerned about youth drinking, they must educate their children. I have heard parents say that you cannot influence children. Well, that is not the case. You clearly can influence children in how to learn, in how to behave at the dinner table. These are the same principles.

The time of night that you go out clubbing and drinking is completely indicative of the experience that you will have. The later you go out, that usually indicates that you are going to have a heavier night. Unfortunately for those who want to go out earlier and have a more social evening, they have no-one to socialise with. Those who go out late do not leave until 10 o'clock or 11 o'clock at night, which then forces them back into a heavier drinking crowd. Personally, as a nondrinker I find that a problem. I love to socialise and I love to go out into drinking societies, but because of that I am pushed to go out later at night. I think that is something that needs to be taken account of.

YOUTH DEPUTY LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION: Today I stand before you to talk about taxidrivers and the concerns that they have. One day I was travelling in a taxi and the taxidriver said to me, 'You know, have we been forgotten? Everything we ask and everything we seem to request never seems to be followed up.' Well, the answer clearly is absolutely not. They have not been forgotten. However, this is not just about the taxidrivers who have to deal with the problems; it is about the people who get into the taxis and create those problems.

If a person who has drunk excessive amounts of alcohol, cannot move properly, spews all over the place and just cannot control themselves gets into a taxi, causes havoc and beats the taxidriver senseless, the taxidriver then has to receive medical attention. A lot of the time the people who do that are not held accountable. In recent times taxidrivers have claimed that they need a cage to separate themselves from the person in the cab. However, others have said, 'No, we don't want that.'

It is very clear that notices must be erected in public places. The notices should outline exactly how much the fine will be for a person who spews in a cab or attacks a driver in their taxi. People also should know that if they get into a taxi and keep the taxidriver waiting, for whatever reason, they will have to pay more money.

On the topic of alcohol and taxidrivers, a former federal Leader of the Opposition, Mr Latham, was asked about his spat with a taxidriver. In his book *The Latham Diaries*, Mr Latham said—

The spat that I had with the taxidriver was nothing more than a bit of a barney. I just got him out of the taxi, rolled him over. I broke his arm, but it was not really much of a problem.

He concluded by saying—

He did wrong by me so I had to do wrong by him. He did not give me a fair price, so I had to tell him what the price was.

This is a clear example of what is wrong with our society. I believe that the solutions that I have presented today, such as signs being erected in public places, would make a very big difference to this problem.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR SOUTH BRISBANE: I will refrain from referring to other political leaders, their drinking habits and what they do with taxidrivers. From the outset I would like to talk about the underlying issues of alcohol related violence—that is, the reason and the motivation for drinking.

In my speech in the adjournment debate on Wednesday I will talk about how we, as youth members, can hopefully engender some kind of debate and discussion within our communities as to why we drink and why we say that a good time must involve alcohol. I do not know what other societies are like or, indeed, what happens throughout our own country. I do not have that kind of world view. However, I am pretty sure that Australia is unique in its opinion that alcohol is intrinsically linked to a good time. I do not think that is a healthy attitude that we hold within our society.

I know this is a discussion and a forum and we already have heard and I am sure will hear some very interesting points of view on how to curb alcohol related violence, but my second point would be to advocate for a tax on the amount of alcohol in a drink per quantity. With cigarettes, prohibitive tax has been shown to be the most effective way to limit the consumption of that desired product. I am not talking about a tax on a specific desired drink as we have seen with alcopops and the success that that has had. Instead, I am talking about a tax on the level of alcohol in a drink. It is impossible to ban certain age groups and certain groups from drinking, but if we make it harder to drink higher amounts then I am sure we will be on the way to addressing alcohol related violence.

In conclusion I return to my initial point, which is that we have to address the underlying problems of alcohol related violence by answering the question: why do we drink? I think that is the issue.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE: What we need here is simple cooperation. The divide between the police, the establishment and the public needs to cease. They need to put aside their own agendas and work together towards a solution to alcohol related violence. As youth, we are tired of having a night out ruined by a small percentage of delinquents. We have to do something to keep reoffenders away from licensed premises.

Up on the Tablelands, in my seat of Dalrymple, the police and the publicans have had enough. Together they have established a red card system. This system can potentially result in banning across the five licensed premises in my area. This development has occurred only in the past few months. Personally, I have seen it decrease excessive drinking.

In conclusion, punishing those who are having a good night out is no longer acceptable. It is clear that alcopops taxes and lockouts simply have not been working. It is not fair that we punish those having a few drinks by making them pay \$100 for a night out. Two Cruisers and a taxi home is becoming unaffordable for the average youth. It is time we took a lesson from the Tablelands and started punishing the offenders, not those having a good night out.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR NUDGE: It is important to remember that young people can be the victims as well as the perpetrators of alcohol related violence. Questions have been asked as to why most young people are able to go out, drink and have a good night while others find themselves arrested for assault or indecent behaviour. Youth drinking alcohol is a more complex issue than smoking or illicit drug use in the sense that alcohol is not inherently bad. You can have one or two drinks and suffer no negative health effects, but increase that consumption on a regular basis and we see a link to violent behaviour, liver disease and, in extreme cases, brain damage. Therefore, the problem is not alcohol consumption itself but excessive alcohol consumption.

First, let us examine the reasons for excessive alcohol consumption. In Australia there seems to be a belief that to go out and have a good time you have to get off your face. In Italy, Greece and many other European nations it is culturally acceptable to drink but culturally unacceptable to get drunk. Those cultures appear to see alcohol consumption as a means of having a good time, but not an end in itself. People do not drink to get smashed; people drink as part of social life. This mentality of drinking for enjoyment rather than excess could become prevalent in Australia, too.

However, cultural change takes time. Governments have been running antismoking campaigns for decades and they have worked in time. Cigarette smoking has become less prevalent in Australia and it is now seen as a bad habit rather than a cool thing to do. Excessive drinking needs to begin to be perceived like smoking: dirty, antisocial and undesirable. Like the antismoking campaign, an antidrinking campaign will take decades—social change takes time—but many of the same methods can be used. With high taxes on products with high alcohol content, a ban on alcohol advertising and antidrinking advertisements, combined with social change in the long term and practical measures in the short term with a two-tiered approach, we can start to curb excessive alcohol consumption.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR MERMAID BEACH: Picture this: it is a Friday night in a local city school. Students are proudly discussing their social calendars for that night. Words such as 'trashed' and 'taxi' are heavily instilled within the youth lexicon. They say that education is the key to empowering youth and providing change within the community. If that is the case then the current education culture in relation to alcohol related violence has not sufficiently provided for students. Whilst existing education campaigns are readily available, policy should further promote alternative learning systems to enable active youth engagement. Students are too proud of their drinking and the media becomes nothing but a blood-sucking monster feeding off those negative generalisations.

It should be up to the school network, with all its resources, academics and community partnerships, to maximise opportunities to alter those attitudes. Drinking is the big bad wolf in modern society's fairytale and, quite frankly, we have no woodcutter to fix our brain cells.

One suggested reform method would entail harm minimisation, whereby students are informed of the dangers of drinking and can curb their habits. Other ways would include lessons alongside sex and drug education to emphasise theoretical and practical programs, peer support groups, podcasts from experienced youth, structured more to media resources and youth centres.

In light of the bigger picture, education should enable students to conduct personal inquiries and investigate cultural condemnation through research grants and key speakers. Starting within the classroom and starting with our minds, we need Gen Y to realise that education is the cure for its hangover.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR INALA: The growing culture of alcohol related violence is slowly demoralising and deconstructing the lives of the current generation of young Queenslanders, although the excessive consumption of copious amounts of alcohol every weekend is not the only factor to blame. As fun as going out, drinking excessively and waking up the next morning not remembering very much at all may be for some young people, it is part of the culture that begs more negative connotations than provides positive ones.

I believe that the growth of alcohol related violence, including incidents of glassings amongst other forms of assaults and grievances, is not only the fault of the consumer market. Part of the responsibility must fall with the publicans and bar staff who serve them. I am sure that I am not alone when I say that publicans and bar staff aplenty serve patrons who are quite clearly intoxicated. It might sound idyllic to say that in a perfect world people would not drink until they could barely stand up if publicans and bar staff discontinued service to patrons who are clearly in that state, but let us be honest: that does not happen.

To that end, the only definitive way to make effective change in this growing culture of drinking without accountability is through re-education. Enhanced liquor licensing measures and stricter methods of enforcement need to be considered, as well as the stringent crackdown on the responsible-service-of-alcohol provisions, which currently only require minimum education and training on the topic. These changes will be the first small steps to change the culture of alcohol related violence in Queensland.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR GAVEN: As a recent addition to the nightclub scene on the Gold Coast, I am all for having a few drinks—keywords being 'a few'—clubbing, dancing and skitzing out to Riverside. Everyone knows the tune and I will not finish the lyrics. There has always been this picture-perfect image of a Sunday afternoon, getting together with friends and family, kicking back with a few cold ones while talking about your week. But I come to wonder, when did it become socially acceptable that this picture-perfect image includes stumbling on the sidewalk or throwing up in the garden as you try to hail a taxi? It is practically multitasking on another level.

This kind of self-deprecation is exactly what this generation has been degraded to. To change a culture overnight is like trying to get to Camp North Pine without a GPS; it is virtually impossible. However, through enforcing values of respect, pride and social confidence we can turn this around. The Gold Coast City Council is putting in a proposal to regulate the number of pubs, clubs and lounge bars in order to restrict the number of people who go to those places—so we do not have police running down to Main Beach casino and so on—along with fingerprint scanners to deter under-age clubbing and repeat offenders.

My fellow youth members have suggested enforcement through two predominant influential things in a youth's life: parents and education. Once we have these two elements together combatting the problem of alcohol related violence in Queensland, the youth of today can then redefine their image and boldly say, 'I am proud to be Australia's youth.'

YOUTH MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS: Glass is a wonderful invention. It makes for wonderful windows, tables, vases and fine jewellery, but it makes for a dodgy night out. Being glassed in the face, stepping on glass on your way home or smashing glass whilst you are grooving on the dance floor are just not cool. It is those issues that make people ask, 'Why?' Why is there still glass in pubs and clubs across Queensland? Plastic cups should be welcomed by all publicans and nightclub owners. The young, the naive and the ravers would still be able to have fun, but in a safer environment. So next time you go out to party or to get funky on the dance floor, ask for plastic instead of glass. Remember: ask for glass or risk your class.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR LYTTON: Today I will be addressing the issue of alcohol fuelled violence by asking the question: how are parents influencing the attitudes of the youth of Queensland? I believe that there are two sides to this story. Firstly, I will be addressing the positives. I am sure when people hear the words 'alcohol' and 'parents' in the same sentence, their first thoughts and opinions are not going to be bright and colourful but more along the lines of irresponsible and reckless.

Ladies and gentlemen, I know for a fact that it does not have to be like this. There are many parents out there who have a stereotypical view of their teenage son or daughter and have decided that, yes, at some stage in their life, young or old, they are going to drink. Those parents have taken it upon

themselves to supply alcohol to their children. This way, they know that they are going to be the ones in control of what their teenagers are going to be drinking and how much they are going to be consuming. Parents who take this approach to alcohol are fostering a more open relationship with their children. Those parents are going to be able to talk more freely about alcohol and, therefore, they are going to be able to offer their children greater education, warnings and safety about the matter, which will ensure that their children will not develop into the glass-wielding, violence-provoking hooligans that we see.

All that said and done, there are still many parents who are oblivious to the trouble their children are getting into while under the influence of the alcohol they are provided. These parents would rather give in to their child's pleadings for alcohol to avoid the conflict that would arise if they were to say no. They are the ones who assume that nothing bad is going to happen to their child if they provide this alcohol to them. But those parents need to be informed of the statistics and the gruesome stories that are the target of this inquiry.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR GREGORY: On the subject of excessive alcohol consumption, I have to agree with the Youth Deputy Premier. Alcohol is addictive. It evokes the same core response from neurotransmitters and regions in the brain as do other drugs and that has long been accepted as a medical fact, especially on the still-developing brain of those around the age or under the age of 20. Yet alcohol consumption is encouraged and very much entrenched in the culture of every university. The consumption there is excessive and irresponsible. It encourages this confrontation that we are seeing.

Every semester you will see at least one pub crawl, one race day, one bar comedy night, one band night and many, many more. I could go on for hours naming them. These people who are out there causing this violence were young once, too. You see our future doctors begin their nights with pre-drinking sessions, with lovely wine that comes out of a bottle or a cask, which they drink by the bucket load. They meet up with future business leaders and CEOs at the pub where they scull beer to the tune of, 'He's a pisspot through and through. Scull, scull, scull.' Then they meet up later in the night with future public office holders, where they have another three or five drinks at a nightclub and dance the night away until five or three, as it is in Brisbane.

We see this entrenched. We see these people going out there and looking for trouble once they are finished. The problem is widespread and it is not helped by the tens of thousands of dollars that are poured into student associations by nightclubs, brewers and distillers to encourage these sorts of events and to encourage students to attend them and to encourage students to drink irresponsibly.

Change needs to happen. Change needs to happen if our country's next best and brightest are not to become entrenched in this culture. How can we expect widespread cultural change if we cannot do it in our universities?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I would remind all members that the time for the debate is two minutes for each member but, given the importance of this topic, I am willing to show a little leniency. But I would ask that all members try to keep their speeches within the two minutes.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN: When I hear a siren in the distance, my immediate thought is that help is on its way—and not necessarily help because something bad has happened but just help in general. To be honest, I do not think that is a naive thought—at least it should not be. I was brought up to see the police, the ambulance, or any emergency personnel for that matter, as being someone there to help. That is all they should be. Sure, they know that their jobs are high risk and that every time they go to work there is an element of danger involved that most of us do not ever have to deal with, but the dangers that they are confronted with due to the unruly and unacceptable behaviour of intoxicated people are simply problems that they should not have to face. Their safety and often their lives should never be jeopardised and certainly not by someone fuelled with alcohol. Why should, for example, a police officer simply serving his community have to deal with a violent drunk whose behaviour is out of control? They should not. It seems that the moment some people drink some of this 'courage in a can' they lose their sense of respect. Our emergency service workers should not bear the brunt of that.

How many incidents in recent times have involved violence in varying degrees against these people? Too many. It is going to continue to be too many unless some changes are initiated. We need to respect our authorities, because they are there to help us, whether we are drinking or not. People need to be reminded, it seems, that these emergency service people are there to be respected and to be obeyed at all times. Drinking is not always an activity to be shunned, but when it seriously endangers another it is not okay. The appalling behaviour we have witnessed is simply not acceptable. This cannot continue.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE: Everyone loves a good beer commercial on TV. They are witty, they appeal to the majority and they often feature catchy songs. When I look back over my favourite television commercials, those advertising alcoholic beverages make up the overwhelming majority. Like I said, everybody loves a good beer ad.

The fact is that Queensland youths have grown up with these entertaining ads, with alcohol becoming a part of our culture. But how do we change something that is so ingrained in our culture? I believe that banning the advertising of alcohol, as has occurred with cigarettes, is the key. Just take a

look at the Broncos v Storm game on Saturday night. Throughout the game a number of advertisements for alcohol were aired. As well, there was the Bundaberg Red Rum smooth moves sponsorship. In addition, sporting sponsorships by alcohol companies occur throughout other Australian sports. As you drive through Brisbane you see dozens of billboards advertising various forms of alcohol, not to mention the other forms of advertising that are engaged in by companies that produce alcoholic beverages.

The influence that these forms of advertising have on youths is huge. Yes, changing a culture can take time, but isn't it worth it? We need to ban alcohol advertising to reduce this alcohol abuse. Everybody loves a good beer ad, but our youth are at stake.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR BROADWATER: I am extremely concerned about the youth of today in relation to the dangerous side effects of alcohol, which is fuelling violence and is having other dangerous consequences. In my city of the beautiful Gold Coast, alcohol related drownings in the waterways and in the ocean are a growing problem that must be addressed. The clubs in Surfers Paradise are merely a few hundred metres away from the beach, which offers partying youths a tempting way to relax after exiting the busy Gold Coast nightclubs. At night the beaches are open but there is no patrol. Too often, drunken youths sit on the beach waiting for disaster to hit. While under the influence of alcohol, sitting on the beach offers a huge risk that too many youths take.

Over the past few years on the Gold Coast we have seen numerous accidents occur on our beaches in relation to alcohol consumption. Additionally, many under-age teens avoid the police by drinking with their friends on the beaches on the Gold Coast. I am concerned that the incidence of alcohol related violence on our beaches at night will only increase and more ignorant youth may become drowning victims. I propose a single night patrol along the beach at Surfers Paradise in order to minimise the risk of alcohol related drownings. With schoolies fast approaching, it is essential that we take action to protect our youth. This danger poses such a great risk that we must take action to ensure safety on our beaches.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR KEPPEL: The youth of today are starting to drink alcohol at a young age. Gone are the days of weekend sleepovers, of enjoying a naive childhood of drinking red cordial and talking about your latest crush. Now, we see kids as young as 12 getting together on weekends and instead of drinking red cordial and playing games in the dark they drink Red Bears and wake up in the morning with a hangover.

Yes, it is an unpleasant thought but it is reality—a reality most commonly found in low socioeconomic and rural areas. One of the main reasons for that is that in these areas the nearest cinema is more than an hour's drive away. The buses stop at 7 pm and the lights at the skate park go off at 10 pm, giving these kids no opportunity other than simply getting drunk and, more than likely, ending up in fights.

Recent surveys show that links can be made between areas of high disadvantage and increased rates of alcohol abuse. Hence the youth of these regions not only experience the challenges that all youth face but those challenges are exacerbated by a higher incidence of alcohol abuse. Therefore, there is a need to implement community and youth led activities, such as under-age rages, battles of the bands and local youth councils, thus decreasing the number of youth participating in binge drinking and finally bringing back the days of those red cordial parties.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE: My electorate is Surfers Paradise, the home of schoolies, nightclubs and thousands of binge drinkers every weekend. Naturally, by living on the Gold Coast I am unavoidably exposed to a culture and environment that accept binge drinking and regular clubbing by tourists and locals. As a result, I have witnessed firsthand alcohol related violence. I have seen people bashed, women assaulted and regular fights. I would really love to say that this happens just every now and again, but the unfortunate truth is that these events occur every weekend without fail.

Seeing these sorts of incidents makes me realise that alcohol related violence is a serious issue, a horrible experience and a growing problem. Alcohol related violence makes the streets of Surfers Paradise a dangerous place for all individuals. I am not just talking about one or two people being a nuisance; I am talking about hundreds and hundreds of drunk people wandering the streets of Surfers Paradise every weekend.

Binge drinking is accepted on the Gold Coast. In fact, it is pretty much encouraged. Schoolies and nightclubs attract people, all with the intention to have fun, with the intention to drink to delirium. Being a teenager myself, I understand that drinking is a social activity and that teenagers do it when they go out in order to fit in and to make themselves feel confident and care-free. However, the motives for binge drinking are not the main issue. The issue is that once a person is intoxicated they either leave the nightclub or get thrown out and then they are free to wander the streets. Usually they would be arrested for being drunk and disorderly, but the fact is that there are so many people doing this that the police cannot arrest 300 people in Surfers Paradise.

We all know the effect that an intoxicated person can have, and a big group of intoxicated people on the streets of Surfers Paradise is not a good combination. They use up police resources and this issue needs to be seen to. This drunken violence must be eradicated, escalating dangers must be stopped and police resources must be freed.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE: Youth can be educated all they like about health and safety issues, but if they are at a party where alcohol has been supplied they will experience extreme peer pressure to drink it. I believe that parents are the key to solving the problem. Adolescents are no longer children but they are not yet adults, as much as we would all like to think they are. They still require guidance and protection to get them through that change from childhood to adulthood. Allowing one's child to have a glass of wine at a family dinner is a far cry from drinking at the large parties that have hit the media recently. Parents who have knowingly bought large amounts of alcohol for youths other than their own children are irresponsible.

It has been identified that alcohol can produce an altered perception of a situation, reduce inhibitions and provide an inflated perception of ego and a sense of invincibility. These effects increase the likelihood of violence occurring and expose youth to extreme risk of harm. We youths have a right to be protected.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR NANANGO: I want to remind the parliament of a young man called Corey Worthington—the young man from Sydney who stood on the television and refused to take off his sunglasses and apologise because he was 'too cool' for that. He would not wear a shirt on television because, once again, he was 'too cool' for that. This is the basic problem with modern society—young people who obviously have the capability to act on impulse yet cannot be held accountable for those actions. The fact is that that young man knowingly advertised a party over the internet, knowingly allowed many people to come to his house, knowingly desecrated people's yards in his street and knowingly ruined his street for that night in terms of their sleep for the night and their sense of a clean, wholesome neighbourhood, and yet still he has not been held accountable for his actions. In fact, he made money out of those actions on radio.

I need to ask: what is happening to our society? That may not have happened in Queensland, but the fact is that this happens all the time. Young people are organising these parties and acting on impulse and not being held accountable for it. Where are their parents? What are they doing? Why are they not putting them over their knee, for goodness sake? The fact is that young people are not being held accountable for their drunken behaviour in public, and that is a disgrace!

YOUTH MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES: I am from the Greenslopes electorate where we love 'Dick'—Cameron Dick, that is. Alcohol is another thing I love. However, alcohol has been made the scapegoat of a rapidly changing society that looks for quick fixes and always asks first if there is a medication to solve this or that. I simply suggest that, if alcohol is so bad, society should be advocating for other methods of recreation such as marijuana. Marijuana has never in its long history caused violence or death. Cheers!

YOUTH MEMBER FOR BULIMBA: What we are here today to discuss is alcohol related violence. Alcohol related violence is prevalent now in a state that I have just visited—Victoria. Like the Youth Deputy Leader of the Opposition, I, too, feel sympathy and express my sympathy to those people who have to drive these drunken lunatics around—that is, taxidrivars. I was in a taxi on the way to Melbourne Airport with a taxidriver named Simon. I asked Simon his views on alcohol related violence and the attacks on taxidrivars in the past. He expressed to me something that I would not have expected. He felt sorry for them, because he told me that when they come into his cab they bring their problems. If the person just had a fight with his wife or her husband, that problem is brought into the taxi.

It shows that one simple problem can extrapolate itself and can become exponentially larger than it was previously and cause not only violence but also heartache in our community. We must stamp out this ability for such a small thing to cause such a grievous imbalance within our public life. We must make sure that every member of our community is not only safe but also secure, within both mind and body. What we must ensure, as government and as people who will go on to hopefully influence the political landscape, is that the people of Queensland and the people of Australia are able to walk the streets at night safely. I visited China and I felt safer there than I do here.

A YOUTH MEMBER: One of the major issues we have is people suggesting to put curfews on Aboriginal communities alone. As an honourable youth member on the other side said earlier, there are people as young as 12 going out and drinking because they have nowhere to go and socialise within smaller rural communities. So rather than just put a curfew on Aboriginal communities alone, we should have a restriction or curfew on all communities. That way, everyone has equal rights and everybody under a certain age everywhere is in their household, out of harm's way and not making a mess of our communities.

One of the biggest problems is the social life in the cities. Most of us in rural towns go out on a Friday night after work and have a few drinks and go home. Cities need to be a little bit more controlled in terms of opening hours at nightclubs. We do have the lockout period. However, rather than allowing

nightclubs to open later we should let them open earlier and shut later. That way we are controlling the amount of people on the streets early in the morning. If someone is highly intoxicated, rather than putting them out into the streets we can shut the bar down and leave them in the bar and let them cool down for a while and have a taxi take them home after they have let the alcohol settle down.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR MOUNT OMMANEY: A lecture in one hand and a bottle in the other. That is what defines the contemporary approach to alcohol and violence in our community. Stories abound almost everywhere in which the key characters all too often are friends and neighbours who are destroying otherwise healthy relationships in paddy wagons—bleeding, bruised or much worse. Without fail, the permanently indignant among us will reply to outrage with all manner of revelations, announcements and demands yet perpetuate the most terrible myth of this issue. We do not have to drink. Youth do not have to drink—not to have a good time, not to come of age and not to achieve the approval of anyone worth being approved of by. Inconsistency simply is the greatest threat to credibility. No education campaign, slogan or hastily achieved crackdown will ever achieve the kind of pervasive cultural change required while prevailing messages contradict each other with a lecture in one hand and a bottle in the other.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR ALGESTER: As was said earlier, lots of people are doing the right thing, including emergency services personnel and people who are in the wrong place at the wrong time. But lots of young people are doing the wrong thing and at some point they need to be taking personal responsibility for their own actions. The government is not your mother. There is nothing classy about a girl who cannot stand up, but if she is going to get that intoxicated it is her personal choice. Going against what everyone else has been saying, asking for plastic cups and higher taxes just because a teenager cannot take responsibility for their own actions is like an obese person suing McDonald's. If you know it is bad for you, do not do it and do not blame someone else for your own poor choices.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR MARYBOROUGH: The inquiry into alcohol related violence asks about the drinking culture and how it should change to create one of individual responsibility. Individual responsibility is something that we need to attend to because it suggests that we do not look out for our friends. What about collective responsibility? If my friend was in trouble, I would step in. It is a guarantee that I already feel responsible for myself. I feel I always come first. It is common sense that if I am feeling like I am in danger I am going to get the hell out of there.

The 'fight or flight' theory talks about two types of people. The 'flight' people are people who will run away, whereas the 'fight' people will face danger if it should creep up. If we are a 'fight' type of person and our friends are in trouble, we will help them. It is a collective responsibility which we gained by natural instinct, just like individual responsibility. I believe that we should encourage people to have a buddy system which would involve people who drink having a group of two or more people. This means you will not just have yourself to look out for you; you will have someone you trust.

YOUTH LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION: I want to make a point about comments that the youth member for Inala made which I believe were slightly skewed relating to hospitality workers, who I believe are wonderful human beings. I have worked extensively in large bars and let me just say that we are very much on the ball. You can barely drop a pin in a bar without Liquor Licensing standing over you. Like all hospitality workers, I had a very healthy contempt for all of my patrons and we all worked very hard to make sure they left as soon as possible. We do not want to give them extra drinks and we do not want them staying. People have mentioned that people are going out later and later now drinking. The reason I go out later is because of the ridiculous price of drinks and it is just cheaper and more economical to go out later. I have invested in a hip flask so I can go out and still not pay. That is a reason why, and it has to be addressed.

I also believe that all of this is socially constructed. In my time in France I was shocked that in my younger brother's primary school class they would go on excursions and the parents and teachers would sit around with the kids and bring out bottles of wine and beer at school functions. We did not even have drinks at my year 12 graduation dinner. Despite how prudish we are with regard to this, we still have the bogan culture of drinking. Children in France have greater exposure at a younger age, yet they do not have the usual filth that frequents the Valley every weekend. We also need to look at this as a societal issue through education and good role models. We need to have role models who are not footballers or drunk tarts. We need people like Sean Connery or William Shatner, who I grew up on, who are good role models for kids. I turned out all right. Short of breeding licences, that is all that I can think of as to how we can solve the problem.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR COOMERA: As one of the youngest youth members in this parliament here today, I hope to offer my perspective and insight on a very important issue within society and the measures we need to take to move forward on this important issue. I, for one, at age 15 cannot drink. I cannot drive. I am barely old enough to hold a job, yet I am aware of teens engaging in negative under-age drinking behaviour from the ages of 14, 15, 16 and onwards. This is the formative stage and this is the point in time at which a drinking culture is established and habits are put into place for years to come. It is therefore at this time when I feel that a concentrated education campaign would be most effective at allowing the youth to obtain the information needed to make informed decisions, and this is

just the first of several key steps that are needed in conjunction with taxation and changes to advertising to reduce alcohol related violence. The issue of under-age drinking is intrinsically linked to alcohol related violence. It is essential that this under-age trend is nipped in the bud to ensure that when teens reach the legal drinking age they can act responsibly and behave in a manner that does not endanger themselves, the public, the police, property and publicans within our society.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD: I would like you to picture a bright, vibrant, young individual. They do well in their subjects, they have an avid interest in sport and they have a very healthy love for music. They are an average, promising member of our nation's youth and, like any youth member, they love a good drink. I ask you to consider their coming of age for drinking. To cut a long and troubling story short, over the first year of their adulthood they slip, like some tragic statistic, into the profile of a binge drinker, losing their employment, spending hundreds a week on alcohol related activities, going out four or more times a week, suffering blackouts, slipping in their grades and, lastly, exhibiting a paranoia that one would not associate with anything other than hard drug abuse.

In this parliament it is easy to blame others and special interest groups for failings in society. I apologise to the honourable member for Maryborough for opposing her view, but I have seen a scenario unfold before my eyes and I did nothing more than say, 'They will stop soon. They will stop themselves.' Perhaps what we really need to do is to take responsibility as a state for the actions, habits and safety of our loved ones.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR BURNETT: To say that this issue is everywhere is an understatement. I come from a small country town of around 7,000 people. Despite being a small country town, the issue of alcohol related violence extends far across my community. For 7,000 people I can name eight pubs, eight bottles, and four licensed venues in the main street alone.

Alcohol, when used in excess, has the ability to destroy innocent lives. Today what we are seeing is a change in youth alcohol culture. We are drinking more, we are drinking longer and, more disturbingly, we are drinking younger. While blame can be apportioned to any number of groups or factors in society, I believe that we, as young people, are most affected by those around us and what we see around us. We now drink not because it is a good social activity but because it is just the thing we do. Drinking is everywhere; it is on the TV, it is in our homes, it is in advertising. I think if the war with alcohol is to be won we need to get parents talking to their kids, young people talking to young people and better education in our schools.

At school we are prepared for life, but we are not prepared for living. If we want to curb binge drinking, the solution is not in introducing greater penalties but in education and sensible limits. We need to educate people about the risks associated with alcohol and place restrictions on how alcohol is portrayed to impressionable youth. Ban alcohol advertising and work with young people at a grassroots level. Perhaps then we can curb this society of binge drinkers.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR CLEVELAND: I will keep this contribution brief as I have only one thought to propose today. As we observe society today and identify issues of concern among the youth, we see recurring instances of excessive, violent and under-age drinking. Why is this? I believe that many of my fellow youth members have hit the nail on the head in offering two answers: excessive drinking is partly due to peer pressure and a lack of education.

However, I believe that young people often succumb to peer pressure because they lack self-confidence and self-worth. Therefore, I propose that perhaps what we need to educate our youth on is their value. Rather than simply telling them of the pros and cons of drinking, let us tell our youth, our families and our friends that they are important and have a value and a right to make their own decisions.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR HERVEY BAY: There is undoubtedly a link in the violence that alcohol causes and the binge-drinking culture that has developed in Australia and that has been passed on from generation to generation. That is why we are proposing education for youth before they hit the peak age. Many propose that this should come from schools. However, only a certain amount of a child's education comes from their schooling life. They are there for only six hours, five days a week. However, they are at home every day of their lives. That is why there needs to be an increased role for parents in teaching their children to act responsibly towards alcohol.

This means more than simply teaching children about what alcohol is, what it means and how to drink responsibly. It means acting as a role model and always watching their own behaviour. Studies have shown that children see their parents as role models and learn their behaviour through their own actions and through the values of their parents. That is why we need to see a lot of parents and families make sure they change their ways from binge drinking or acting irresponsibly with alcohol when they are around their children.

As such, the role of parents has already been a focus in the government's initiative through advertisements on television. However, acting as role models for their children needs to become a central focus for parents and we need to see possible reforms through this process through sending out

information pamphlets to all families in Queensland on how parents can teach their children responsible ways to act towards alcohol. If we give that education in the home today, that will make changes for tomorrow's youth.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR KALLANGUR: It is fair to say that the collaboration of people here today represent the majority of youth and that we are a technology generation. It has been mentioned that alcohol abuse and violence are growing into big issues and that parental influence has a large impact on the epidemic. A factor that has been recognised is that advertising is a major issue. That is all well and good as the stem of the issue.

As a teen I admit that I am addicted to the use of MySpace and Facebook. The social sites are a brilliant way to stay in contact, as we have proven through the YMCA journey this year. However, these sites often advertise youth parties and are often used as a way to boast about a good night that was had on the weekend. The sites are not just about addresses and invites. People such as my 12-year-old sister sees pictures of people she knows getting smashed on the weekends, and it is not always a pretty sight. It de-idolises those people in her eyes.

Perhaps for the epidemic to stop we need to crack down on MySpace, Facebook and other social sites. Imposed penalties for the promotion of alcohol on the internet need to be stricter or enforced so that the epidemic does not reach younger youth.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA: It seems to me that this inquiry has been looking at ways to restrict and restrain excessive drinking, but I believe we should be looking at social and cultural change, as many youth members have mentioned. In some European cultures, the legal drinking age is lower than it is here and there is a more relaxed environment. Most children and teenagers grow up having a light drink with dinner or while out socialising with family and friends. In those cultures, people learn how to enjoy and savour a drink. When young adults reach the legal drinking age, it is not a big deal for them to go out and drink because they are already familiarised with and settled in to social drinking.

Here in Australia we have a legal drinking age of 18. In our culture, a lot of people see drinking as a means to an end. A lot of people go out drinking and do not stop until they are fully drunk or on the verge of passing out. Some in our culture see drinking as a way to rebel and some are just persuaded into it, whether they want to or not.

Personally I do not drink and I do not have any desire to. But there have been times when I have been tempted and almost persuaded to have a drink. When you admit to people you do not drink or politely refuse a drink offered to you, a lot of people look down at you or ostracise you. For most it is not okay to not drink. This is not right. This culture needs to change. European cultures have had centuries to develop. It cannot happen overnight, but it can happen and it needs to.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR MOGGILL: On the topic of education in relation to excessive drinking or binge drinking, we need to broaden our horizons. We need to look not just at how alcohol affects our bodies but also at why people drink alcohol. There are many reasons people drink in excess, such as peer pressure, to forget something horrible that has happened or even to gain confidence in order to talk to members of the opposite sex. It does not matter. We need to increase education in healthier ways to deal with issues rather than just go out, get wasted, wake up with a hangover and the problem is still there. People need to talk to guidance officers or other members of the community who can help deal with issues rationally.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE: Very often I have heard suggestions of raising taxes on alcohol as a possible solution for this grievous problem. However, based on personal experience, I know that we need to be very wary of this bandaid solution. We have heard talk of the current culture of pre-drinks and late nights where people drink before they leave for a night out. I would like to verify what the Youth Leader of the Opposition has said: yes, we do drink before we go clubbing, but only because it is so ridiculously expensive to buy all our drinks out on the town. I believe that raising taxes on alcohol will only exacerbate this problem and foster our current culture of pre-drinks, as we drink earlier and drink more before leaving, to save money.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR BROADWATER: I would like to begin by commending the member for Thuringowa for her ideas. Like her, I believe that the legal drinking age should be 16. At the end of last year I went on a six-week exchange to Germany, where the legal drinking age is 16. I met a student who actually lived on a winery. His parents were in the business and he was not a binge drinker. He was very aware of binge drinking. In Germany, when youth go out to parties they are much more relaxed about the whole idea of drinking. They do drink, but it is more for social means and they do not binge drink. I am embarrassed to say that at one party the Australians were drinking far more than the Germans. They were binge drinking while the Germans were just having a casual drink. I agree with the member for Thuringowa that maybe the drinking age should be lowered.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR CAPALABA: I would like to expand on what the member for Kallangur stated earlier. I draw the chamber's attention to the case of Matt Stanley, an innocent young man who was killed due to drunken violence within my electorate. His death was as a result of the binge-drinking culture.

Generation Y's reliance on technology has caused a decrease in general social skills. The youth of today are using social networking sites to contact one another and to make new friends, as opposed to calling them on the phone or talking to them face to face. From personal experience I can tell you that youth are more likely to be open on an avenue like MSN rather than in person. Youth are becoming more and more afraid of others' opinions and rejection. This has caused the creation of the binge-drinking culture.

It is much easier and simpler to talk to others when under the influence so that one is not accountable for one's mistakes. Admitting one's mistakes and failures is a hard thing to do, hence the belief that alcohol is needed for a good night out. The solution to this problem lies within education and families, as my fellow youth members have already pointed out. Programs including teamwork, speech making and liaising within schools can work towards improving youths' face-to-face social skills.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR MUNDINGBURRA: Queensland's Indigenous communities are plagued by a dark history caused by the actions of past governments. However, these days most Indigenous communities are plagued by alcohol abuse and violence. Alcohol abuse in Indigenous communities is a much more complex problem than alcohol abuse in places like Fortitude Valley, Surfers Paradise or Flinders Street East and are most often related to past events and psychological abuse of Indigenous elders who experienced firsthand the stolen generation.

Indigenous communities need our help. That help includes changing the drinking mentality of pubs and clubs in remote Indigenous communities and changing the mindsets of Indigenous youth without the need to make communities completely dry, which is discriminating to Indigenous constituents. I believe that greater education of the damage that alcohol abuse can cause in Indigenous communities is the key to healthier Murrumbidgee and the key to greater social prosperity in Indigenous communities.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR WATERFORD: In 2006 another young man died due to alcohol related violence. This man's name was Daniel Wade. At the age of 21 he was bashed to death by a drunk while trying to stop a fight that his friend was involved in but had not started. At 11.30 on Friday night he was rushed to hospital in a coma and put on respiratory equipment to help him breathe. At 3.02 am the next day, his mother was told he would not live and that she had a choice to make: to pull the plug or wait six months and then they would do it. She pulled the plug. She was also the one who had to ring his fiancée, who had a kid on the way.

But it was not Daniel's fault, it was not his friend's fault and, some might say, it was not the alcoholic's fault. This man affected so many people's lives: people within the community, his family as well as their close friends. It affected me, as Daniel Wade was my best friend's brother. I believe it was the server's fault, as he continually served this alcoholic man, even after it was noticeable that he was drunk. My point is that you cannot crack down on alcoholics if you cannot crack down on providers.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR ASPLEY: I would like to raise the point that young kids have older siblings. They see them come home at one o'clock in the morning and they do not know if they are all right or not. I would also like to raise the point that youth have to be educated by teachers, but mostly they have to be educated by their parents. Parents should not just give in to their children and say, 'It will be another mess. It will just be another fight.' Parents should teach their children that it is not right for them to binge drink and that they should set an example for their younger siblings, because the younger siblings will always look up to their older brothers and sisters.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR NICKLIN: I would like to reiterate and build on what many of my fellow youth members have said. It is clear that this affects nearly all of us, if not all of us, in this room. The focus of today's debate is essentially a cultural issue. It is the product of a changing society. We need to take a step back from the visible symptoms and address the cause of what may be referred to as a social plague.

It appears as though, as Australian youth, we lack the ability to exercise self-control, have self-worth or have an appreciation of something that could be, or should be, reserved as a special treat, like food. You do not consume food to the point of being full because being full is the idea. You consume food because you appreciate the food and you appreciate the meal. We have lost the focus of what alcohol is for. It is misused and abused.

For a significant percentage of the youth population who operate within an environment of partying and excessive alcohol consumption, the problems starts in the home. I reiterate what the Youth Deputy Premier mentioned earlier. It is time for parents to start exercising some responsibility, to stop trying to play the role of a child's best friend, especially in regard to the purchase of alcohol. It is imperative that the measures that are implemented are preventive and address the issue at its core to ensure that, as a representative body, we are not just putting another bandaid on a ever-growing social wound.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR LOGAN: I would like to say something that my mother always seems to be reminding me of. When we had the legal drinking age of 21, everyone started drinking at 18. They are still going to do it, no matter what their age. My mother said that when the age was lowered to 18 everyone started drinking at 16. So I propose that if we put the legal drinking age back to 21 then the age at which people start drinking might go back up.

I do not want to put down the ideas of my fellow youth members, but I have heard some of those ideas proposed. In my opinion, and going from the experience of my family members, when the clubs have closed, family members have come home and continued drinking anyway. I think that if people are going to drink responsibly they should be allowed to and that the clubs should be left open for them. If people are going to go home and keep drinking, then it is only fair for other people to keep having fun and good times if they are going to be able to do so responsibly.

Also, in relation to the tax on alcohol, I have known people to go out and buy more alcohol in bulk. So they are having more alcohol and paying less for it. When they go out and do this, they usually drink more and get more drunk, because they have more of it to drink. I think the tax on alcohol is not working that well, because people are still going to buy it no matter whether the tax is on it or not. That is just my opinion.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR CALOUNDRA: I believe attaching a negative connotation to the consumption of alcohol takes the issue out of context and creates much confusion among youth. Alcohol can be many things. It can be used in celebrations, sorrow or everyday life. Alcohol does not have to be seen as a bad thing.

In relation to the discussion about people going out and drinking later and later, I suggest that the logic and reasoning behind this is due to the excessive prices of drinks in establishments, some of which can be attributed to the recent tax increase on alcohol. Following on from that, it is common practice for citizens to mix their own drinks, which no longer makes the alcohol content of the drink standardised as it is a cheaper alternative.

I understand that action needs to be taken in order to change the general mentality around excessive drinking and binge drinking. However, the issue should not be confused with socially responsible drinking, which is commonly embedded in Australian values, whether it is right or wrong.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR WHITSUNDAY: I completely disagree with what the member for Narangba has said. In Germany, the drinking culture is, as she said, to be very social. They drink because they want to socialise. That is why they have the luxury of a drinking age of 16 years. In Australia, we drink because we want to get drunk. It is because we just want to drink. Lowering the drinking age from 18 to 16 will be disastrous in these circumstances. In saying that, I am sure all youth members know that the majority of us in Australia—probably 90 per cent plus—would have touched alcohol at the age of 16, anyway. That is why it is very important to reinforce that no-one will drink alcohol until the age of 18.

A very good way to reinforce this law is to punish everyone under the age of 18 who is under the influence of alcohol. The current law states that you only punish someone at the age of 18 being in possession of alcohol. That is exactly why people like Corey Worthington and many other teenagers every weekend cannot get punished for being drunk. But if we have a law that says that if a teenager is found to be drunk they can be punished, this will change our drinking culture overall.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR GREGORY: I have to agree with the youth member for Logan and the youth member for Whitsunday. We cannot lower the drinking age. We need to consider that alcohol is a drug and we need to treat it like any other drug. As I said before, it has the same effect—and I can only draw upon my own experience in fields of study—on neurotransmitters as many other drugs, especially in areas of the brain such as the cortex hippocampus and amygdala. These are areas of the brain that control our perceptions of reality and our addiction centres.

Why we treat something like alcohol with such liberal methods when we treat other drugs such as ecstasy or cocaine with more hardline measures is beyond me. It seems like hypocrisy, especially in young people whose brains are still developing. That is where the medical issue stands on it. I am afraid I cannot support the lowering of the drinking age.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR CHATSWORTH: I will be short and sweet. I want to throw my support behind the youth member for Whitsunday in what he said. Although many adults like to say that under-age drinking is a horrible thing, in the same sentence they also say that it is just a typical teenage thing and that everybody does it. If people below the age of 16 began to drive without a licence, they would be held accountable for their actions. Yet, people under the age of 18 can go out and get drunk and really nothing happens.

I also want to say that there has been a big focus on the negative things that teenagers do with regard to drinking, but I suggest that it is obvious that many teenagers have good drinking habits. Those people need to be celebrated and respected, not be put down.

YOUTH MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER: I agree with many of the youth members in that education campaigns are the key to reducing alcohol related violence. However, I would like to stress the type of education that should be implemented. At my school the effects of alcohol are taught in health and physical education classes, but we only learn from textbooks. I can attest that those words on paper had a very small effect on the students' behaviour in regard to alcohol, and this was evident in the wild party that was held later that night.

What is needed is visual and personal education. Detailed video clips showing the horrific effects of excessive alcohol consumption will have a much greater effect. Likewise, personal addresses to a class by a young person who has experienced firsthand the effects of excessive alcohol consumption will allow students to really understand and appreciate the effects of excessive alcohol consumption. It is only through these more interactive and captivating education techniques, not words on paper, that we will be able to change the excessive drinking culture.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The time for debate now being expired, I call the Youth Deputy Premier.

YOUTH DEPUTY PREMIER: I want to say how proud I am to see the support, interest and really intelligent thought that has gone into this debate. Clearly, we realise that it is not okay to wake up the next morning after a big weekend with a sore liver and that it is not okay to finish your first year of university with cirrhosis of the liver.

I want to put in my two cents worth in that in this inquiry the government clearly wants to know what they can do. We recognise that it is ultimately the parents who need to help with the education process, but the government also wants to know what they can do to help. There is a direct relationship between alcohol and violence and, in that regard, an increase of alcohol at an event or venue will often equal an increase in violence.

We also need to be aware of what the government has termed in their inquiry as 'harm minimisation'. Looking at tactics such as taxes, replacing glass with plastic and other general safety restrictions, I would actually think of this in terms of dealing with terrorism in that it is an ideological battle and you have to work on the hearts and minds. I am currently studying terrorism; hence I am using this terminology. When you are dealing with terrorism, if you are putting your restrictions out there for the public to see then you are actually defeated; the ideology is being defeated. If you are going to have too many restrictions such as police out there monitoring the Valley and if you are saturated in restrictions, that will have a reverse effect. I think we have just about reached the point where any more restrictions will have a reverse effect. Once again, I thank the other youth members for such an interesting debate.

Question put—That the Youth Deputy Premier's motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.