



House of Assembly - Thursday, 4 June 2009, Page 3051

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (MISCELLANEOUS) AMENDMENT BILL

Mr PICCOLO (Light) (11:08): I rise briefly on this matter to clarify some matters raised by people who pretend to know local government when clearly they do not. First of all, one of the reasons that was mentioned for introducing this bill was to protect kids in playgrounds, etc. The reality is that at the moment local government has the power to make rules about the use of any land or building under its control. So, councils have existing power over any public building or public lands they own. If they are not doing it now, the question one has to ask is: why is local government not banning smoking in those areas when it has the existing power to do so?

It is unfortunate that members opposite have not done their homework because those powers do exist. By all means, trust local government to do the right thing, but talk to them and find out why they are not banning smoking on some reserves. In fact, some councils already do ban smoking in public places. For example, in some playgrounds there are signs that clearly indicate that you cannot smoke. That is a power that local government is currently exercising in some areas; the fact that they all do not is a relevant question. However, you do not need this bill to protect children in reserves, playgrounds or public buildings.

Another issue raised was that we do not trust local government and that is why we are not supporting the bill. That is very interesting because, only a few weeks ago, I heard debate in the upper house on a very good bill that passed through this place. The reason the Liberals opposed it was that they could not trust local government to enforce or apply the proposed law.

It is interesting that their upper house colleagues do not support local government and oppose bills because they cannot trust it to do the right thing. That bill was about improving the environment, so it is interesting that, according to the member for Goyder, some things in the environment are important but other things are not.

The alcohol-free zone is a very good example, and involves issues around not only behaviour but also safety. Clearly, this is not the same as smoking, which is an offensive habit, and I accept that. I am a nonsmoker and always have been. I do not like the habit, and I do not particularly like going to people's homes where they smoke. Having said that, to put this in the same category as alcohol-free zones is a nonsense. In addition, alcohol-free zones can be implemented only with the concurrence of the commissioner for liquor licensing to ensure that alcohol-free zones are not used for political purposes, and that is a check and balance. So, that legislation is quite different.

The member for Finniss said that we should do anything to reduce the take-up of smoking, and I could not agree more: we should do everything we can to make sure that people do not take up smoking. The only area of growth in smoking is amongst young people and, according to him, we should do anything: we should either ban it or do what his colleagues suggested last week, that is, we should fine young people who smoke. If, according to his criteria, we should do everything, perhaps we should do that as well.

When you look at the reasons the Liberals have given for this measure, clearly it is clouded in smoke because it has not been thought through. If they are sincere about doing something about smoking, they would support education programs and support the things we have done on this side of the house about advertising, etc. and would not bring in these sorts of things to the chamber that really do not achieve much because, on the important issue of young people in public places, over which local government has care and control, local government already has the power to act. The Liberals should make sure that the councils in their area exercise those powers now.

Debate adjourned on motion of Dr McFetridge.