

**SUMMARY OFFENCES (PIERCING AND SCARIFICATION)
AMENDMENT BILL**

29 October 2008

The Hon. D.G.E. HOOD: I thank members for their contribution and I would like to sum up by trying to address some of the questions that were raised, if I may. I will be brief, given that there are plenty of other things for us to cover this evening.

Those who are familiar with my second reading speech would have noticed that I said I am open to amendments with respect to ear-piercing particularly. I agree with the points made by the Hons Mr Lawson and Mr Lucas. My personal view is that ear-piercing is very much a separate case and should therefore be subject to separate legislation or rules, if you like, or separate consideration.

The question is—and I do not really have a good answer for it, to be honest; but I look forward to the committee stage—whether or not we simply exclude ear-piercing. That is, we put in the legislation that ear-piercing is exempt, or we impose a lower age for ear-piercing to be okay without parental consent. That is a matter that I am happy to debate with members when the time comes. So, I agree with what the Hons Mr Lawson and Mr Lucas said in that regard.

The Hon. Ms Schaeffer raised the point that there are several things that 17 year olds can do currently under that legislation. Of course, that is true; however, there are also several things that 17 year olds cannot do under legislation, for example, vote or drink alcohol, etc. I think the point that she is making is somewhat arbitrary, and I agree with that at some level. Where do we draw the line? Should it be 16, for example? Should this bill be targeting people under 16? I think that is a valid question, and the answer to that is: I am not sure. We have to pick some number, some age, in order to put a bill forward for debate.

I have had fairly extensive consultation with the industry and there was very much a mixed view within the industry itself regarding 16 and 18. I chose to go for the more conservative option and bring it to the chamber for debate. If people feel that the age should be lower, that is a debate I am obviously willing to have.

In her contribution, the Hon. Ms Kanck said that she has never had a complaint about body piercing. That may be the case, but it is certainly not the case in my experience. I have had many complaints about it, and that is why I have brought this bill to the council. I estimate that I have had at least a dozen complaints from individuals.

I remember one specific woman who came to me who did not want to be identified. She told her story on the Leon Byner show, giving just her first name. She told of her two children, aged 12 and 14, who underwent piercing without her consent, and she was absolutely ropeable. In fact, she wrote to me perhaps eight months or so ago, and I have had a number of meetings with her. She has stated her case quite strongly, along with a lot of other parents whom I have met and who feel the same way.

I would like to take up one of the points that the Hon. Ms Kanck made about confiscating the ring or stud, as the case may be. I had that discussion with the woman I just mentioned. I will call her Mrs Smith for the sake of clarity. The response that Mrs Smith gave me was that, 'It's just impossible. He's 14 years old. I can't simply rip it out of his skin because he won't give it to me.'

Those are the issues that parents face in the real world and that is why this bill would assist parents. The industry is broadly supportive of this measure. I have met a number of parents who are also broadly supportive. The Hon. Ms Kanck then made the ridiculous statement that Family First wants the state to sit at the kitchen table. I reiterate that that is a ridiculous statement; it is not true. It is just the usual rubbish that we get from the Democrats.

With those few words, I look forward to the committee stage. As I said, I am certainly open to amendments with regard to various ages, and I think the point about ear-piercing is entirely valid. I commend the bill to members.