

## Legislative Council

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### KANCK, HON. S.M.

**The Hon. A. BRESSINGTON** (17:35): I also rise to make a brief contribution, which I will read so that I do not put my foot in my mouth. I think it says a lot of the Hon. David Winderlich that he would move this motion in what he believes is in defence of the Hon. Sandra Kanck—that is my interpretation. It shows loyalty to his party and to someone who was a member of this council for 16 years. The Hon. Sandra Kanck no doubt believed that she served her particular constituency well and held the party line on issues, and those issues are what I believe has brought the Democrats to their present position.

I stated in my farewell speech that the Hon. Sandra Kanck was a person who I believed had a kind heart. I know of people she fought desperately for in matters relating to child protection and the Family Law Court, and I have heard from others that at times she was reduced to tears in her efforts to try to get some level of justice for those people. I also know how frustrating it can be to try to penetrate the barricades that are put up in what I believe are efforts to cover up incompetence and, often times, gender prejudice in those particular arenas, but they are other stories for other days.

I also saw in the Hon. Sandra Kanck a person who was able to show compassion and thoughtfulness at times, and I believe these are the qualities that should be acknowledged. These are the character traits that define who and what we are outside of this place, and they are qualities that in the political arena are rarely identified, let alone acknowledged, by those with whom we share this chamber. That is basically the nature of the job we have and the work that we do.

I have read and reread the speech made by the Hon. Michael Atkinson on Thursday 19 February, and I must say that in that speech there is little I can refute in the matters that he raised that I bore witness to. He has addressed the actions and behaviour of the Hon. Sandra Kanck, based on her performance. I see no personal attacks in any of the comments that he made, and I see nothing in the comments or in the speech that are not already available on the public record. The truth is that, in respect of some of the occasions that the Attorney-General mentions in his speech, the Hon. David Winderlich is asking us to defend the indefensible and put it down to an abuse of parliamentary privilege, which I do not believe is the case.

I was in this chamber the night the Hon. Sandra Kanck insisted on putting on the record ways and means used by some to commit suicide. I recall many of us trying to reason with her that night and convince her that it was an irresponsible action, yet she persisted and had her way. Then this chamber was forced to set a precedent, which was considered unparliamentary, by having that particular part of her speech struck from the record. I recall that the Hon. Rob Lucas was one of the members who objected to such an action because *Hansard* should not be altered and should bear witness to every word spoken in here.

Part of me on that night agreed with what he said, yet the other side of me also agreed that a person in this place should show a greater level of responsibility with the information put on that record. To this day, I am still not sure why the Hon. Sandra Kanck felt the need to be quite so explicit. It was almost as though she believed that she was the only person in here who related to the pain and anguish that so many go through who are emotionally stuck in depression, hopelessness and helplessness. If that is the case, I believe she was being presumptuous.

Our concern, and mine in particular, was that people become quite desperate, and anyone contemplating suicide might stumble on this speech and then act on one of those methods. However, she was unable to appreciate the view that it was irresponsible. Of course, the most disturbing part for me was that she would never know whether her words had affected anyone in such a way.

The honourable member attended a rave party; her face was plastered all over the paper and, as a result of this, her naive followers named an ecstasy pill after her—not quite the legacy that most of us would hope for in our time in this place. I still do not think that the Hon. Sandra Kanck was able to comprehend how difficult it was for parents to counter her antics and public comments on illicit drugs when so many of them were trying desperately to convince their kids that drugs bring pain and suffering in many cases and more often than not do not help anyone achieve their goals.

Public outrage was expressed in letters to the editor, via talkback radio, and I received many emails saying that we should insist on her resignation. She appeared to thrive on the controversy, and I must admit that every time she opened her mouth about drugs I would quietly give thanks, because it was an opportunity for the will of the people to be expressed and the anger, outrage and disbelief of her actions were an indication that the majority of the community had not bought the cruel hoax of the propaganda of the legalisation movement.

In her pursuit to normalise drugs and minimise the extent of the harm of these substances to our young, she was also not past misrepresentation of public figures to assist in her deception. In the lead-up to the debate on medical marijuana, the Hon. Sandra Kanck and David Caldicott held an information session where they aired a video on the need for marijuana to be prescribed for illnesses, and in that video, entitled *Wanting to Inhale*, they showed Dr Robert Dupont in the 1970s in his role as adviser to the White House advocating medical marijuana.

They failed to mention that Dr Dupont had publicly recanted his views and publicly apologised to the American people for misleading them on such a vital issue. I raised this in my speech on the bill, and in her rebuttal this was not mentioned, even though I tabled a letter from Dr Dupont himself expressing his disappointment in the Australian Democrats for using his image and words that were spoken over 30 years ago.

As some may know, Dr Dupont is the founder of the National Institute on Drug Abuse, considered to be one of the foremost authorities for research on the effects of illicit drugs. He has dedicated 30 years of his life to setting the record straight and undoing some of the damage he had done in his younger years.

The Hon. David Winderlich has stated that we should use privilege judiciously and for the greater good, rather than pursue personal agendas. I can say with confidence that Dr Dupont would have taken action if it were not for the fact that this particular

abuse occurred under parliamentary privilege. In fact, just for the record, I will repeat the words of Dr Dupont that were spoken at an international conference in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1987, as follows:

*Not only is marijuana worse than alcohol and tobacco combined, but it has other distinctive properties that neither of the others have. I now consider marijuana to be the single biggest new health problem in our nation. For today's youngsters, kicking the marijuana habit, individually or as a group, is going to be a life and death struggle. My supporting decriminalization of marijuana was the worst thing I ever did. I hereby apologise to the American people.*

I wonder what recourse Dr Dupont could expect from the Hon. Sandra Kanck, who used her position in this place to his detriment. I was also in this chamber the night she made the statement about giving bushfire victims a dose of MDMA to overcome their trauma. She added returned Vietnam vets to her list, and then was shocked that the media jumped all over it. She claimed that she had been unfairly misrepresented in the media on the intention behind her words.

She was advocating the use of a dangerous and illegal drug about which there is sound scientific research that no level of use of this drug is safe. She used the tragedies of others to pursue her liberal drug agenda. I am sure that the bushfire victims and returned vets would much rather have compassion and practical support in order to recover from their life experiences than to be used as a political football to make headlines.

In fact, the Democrats behaved as poorly as the Attorney-General (Hon. Michael Atkinson) has been accused of behaving, and perhaps the Attorney-General simply chose an inappropriate time to air his views on the conduct of another member. Most will recall that I did exactly the same on the day that the Hon. John Darley was sworn in, so it would be quite hypocritical of me to condemn another of the same conduct.

Perhaps I am also able to empathise with the Attorney-General on why he would use such a time to express his views on the occasion that he did. Can the Attorney-General be criticised for abusing his position? That would depend on the perception of each person in this chamber today and whether or not selective memory is ruling the day, whether it is an opportunity to score political points, whether there are others like the Hon. David Winderlich who still somehow hold the view that we should all agree with the words and actions of others, or whether we are actually able to use our democratic right and freedom of speech to speak the truth.

I do not believe that the content of the Attorney-General's speech is defamatory in any way towards the Hon. Sandra Kanck, that his words have misrepresented her conduct in any way or that what was said by him can be seen to be inaccurate; therefore, I do not support this motion.