



Yesterday Ross Eastgate wrote that councillors should stay out of morals issues. But **Ken Vernon** argues that everything that goes on in our town is everyone's concern and that moral standards are necessary

NOTHING gets people as hot under the collar as sex - unless it is 4X4 hoons, but that, thank goodness (and thanks to all the people who wrote in offering to drag me around the block behind their 4X4s next time it floods), was last week's Crossfire issue.

This week it is the suggestion by Gold Coast City councillor Rob Molhoek that he form an anti-sleaze taskforce with other like-minded Queensland councillors to protest against proposals by the Crime and Misconduct Commission that, if adopted, would 'liberalise' the adult entertainment industry.

Good on him is what I say. It's about time someone said 'enough is enough'.

Like my like-minded colleague wrote of himself yesterday, I am far from a prude when it comes to what is euphemistically termed the 'adult entertainment industry'.

However, I step with some trepidation into this minefield, all too aware of the fate of one of the first newspapermen who did so and who ended up paying a hell of a price.

It was way back in 1855 that the editor of *The Ballarat Star*, one Henry Seekamp, said enough is enough when he criticised saloon dancer Lola Montez for her 'spider dance' in which she would shake her petticoats in order to dislodge a make-believe spider - in the process showing a shapely ankle.

Lovely Lola demanded a public meeting to discuss the issue, but when the naive Henry turned up Lola set about him with a horsewhip, to the delight of the crowd who no doubt thought publicly whipping a journalist was even better enter-

CROSSFIRE

vernok@gcb.newstld.com.au



On the right track... Cr Rob Molhoek

tainment than the spider dance!

But there comes a time when any right-minded person must say that enough is enough and I agree with right-minded Rob that that time has come.

I grew up in the wild, wild '60s (which, unfortunately, were pretty tame for me) and I think the love-child generation got it pretty right when they came up with the definition of the adult entertainment industry as anything carried on between consenting adults in private.

That said, there are always going to be those who either have to or want to pay for their pleasure and that is their right - right up to the point where it begins to impinge on the right of others not to be confronted with what they think is wrong, if you follow me.

There are two issues to the so-called councillor sleaze patrol that need to be discussed. Firstly, is it any concern of Cr Molhoek who does what in the Coast entertainment precinct?

Secondly, is he right that the effect of any legislation will be that carte blanche rules?

First things first. It is the right of ANY Gold Coaster to protest against what he or she thinks goes against their individ-

ual sense of right or wrong, or that is against the common good, or is just plain immoral.

Not only does a city councillor also have that right, but as a person who, hopefully, was elected to public office on the basis of their beliefs, has an OBLIGATION to speak out.

That gives the voting public the chance to vote for or against them on the basis of what they truly believe (bloc members please take note), and agree with him or not. Cr Molhoek has at least had the gumption to come out and take a stand.

Addressing the second point is harder, because a lot of confusing stuff has been written about the CMC proposals.

In the preamble to the proposals the CMC points out, rather superfluously, that 'live adult entertainment has developed and diversified greatly over the past decade and now incorporates performances that go well beyond the traditional concept of a striptease show'.

The CMC made a total of 29 recommendations and, as you might expect, most of these represent good common sense and logical responses to changing circumstances in the industry.

The problem is that while the

legal adult entertainment is, according to the CMC, already well regulated, the legal sector accounts for only about 20 per cent of the total industry.

The main thrust of the CMC proposals is to draw that 'illegal' 80 per cent under the umbrella of regulation.

Nothing wrong with that, is there? Well, like many things, the devil is in the detail, so it depends on 'how' that 80 per cent is drawn in (that counts, and this is where protesters like Rob Molhoek come in).

The sad fact is that in our litigious society nothing is illegal until it is specifically deemed to be illegal, unlike the past where everything that wasn't legal was deemed to be illegal, which made law enforcement much easier and simpler.

For instance, while there has been an uproar about suggestions that 'genital self-penetration' and other graphic forms of sexual titillation would be legalised under the new proposals, the fact is - as the CMC points out - 'there is currently no legal prohibition against live acts of genital self-penetration in Queensland, so long as they are not carried out in a place to which the public is permitted to have access and are not done with intent to insult or offend the viewer'.

The CMC solution is the standard bureaucratic solution - simply allow such acts to take place in licensed venues.

In other words, anything goes provided everyone pays tax on it, and moral standards be damned.

It is this 'immoral' solution which Cr Molhoek and many others think is wrong.

They believe that not only do these acts demean the women who carry them out and the men who pay to watch, but society as a whole. If you think about it, it is difficult to disagree.

There is another, more pragmatic reason to rethink the 'carte blanche' solution.

History shows that low-grade sleaze shows - taxed or not - attract the lowest common denominators of any society and precincts that offer such 'entertainment' soon become no-go areas for decent families and law-abiding holiday-makers of the kind that are the Gold Coast's bread, butter and jam.