

SUBMISSION TO THE LEGAL AFFAIRS AND COMMUNITY AND SAFETY COMMITTEE.

BY THE YARAKA HOTEL IN SOUTHWEST QUEENSLAND.

We respectfully submit the following information for your consideration in the sincere hope that the committee will have a greater understanding of the difficulties which hotels situated in remote and isolated areas of Queensland face.

We must also state that we understand that any business that is required to comply with Government legislation should be expected to pay fees commiserate with the work involved to uphold the processes.

However we feel that there is a serious anomaly with the 'one fee fits all'. As such we make the following points which apply to our situation.

- Yaraka is 1339 km from Brisbane, 850 km from Rockhampton, 220 km from Longreach and 163 km from Blackall.
- The only supplies we buy 'locally' i.e. Longreach and Blackall are butcher, baker, and supermarket items.
- Our liquor and frozen goods are sourced from Brisbane and Rockhampton.
- The added cost of transport on these supplies makes it increasingly difficult to being impossible, to be competitive with nearby larger towns.
- Yaraka has a town population of 24.

- Our catchment area for locals extends 100 km around the Yaraka township and the population within this area is under 60 people.
- We are fortunate that Yaraka is becoming increasingly popular with travellers and during the cooler months this boosts our turnover to offset the very quiet period between November to mid April.
- Hotels in these small remote and isolated areas are the hub of these communities. We refer to ourselves as the hosts of the 'Family Community Centre' and our patronage reflects this.
- Increasing costs are becoming a stressful issue; our electricity costs \$50 per day; this cost and other associated fixed expenses such as insurance, licence fees, rates, ect averages our running costs at \$400 per day.
- Over the last few months we've had to cut back severely on employing staff and are now using local casuals when required.
- We believe there is not a great understanding from people in the populous areas, of the severely extended drought conditions, and that the immediate relief from rain that generates good news stories does not reflect the fact that it will take many years for the rural industry to get back on its feet.
- From our perspective it seems grossly unfair that we, with a struggling annual turnover, are expected to pay the same licence fee as a hotel with a multi million turnover.
- If a hotel closes in a larger centre, town or city, there are usually other hotels to make up for this and the impact is not severe.
- If hotels such as ourselves are forced to close the impact is huge and the township receives another 'nail in the coffin' for survival, and this is said, by the experience of Yaraka which for many generations was

a viable township, but in 2005 the railway closed and the town lost a third of its population; then the school closed, then the Yaraka Store. However the good news is that the School has reopened as an annexe of the Longreach School of Distant Education, the Yaraka Store has new owners with good ideas, and confidence is here that Yaraka will survive – using cost effective initiatives to cope with the hard times.

SUMMARY.

The current licence fee is a serious imposition for very small licensed premises that hurts. As already stated it is recognised that Government requires to charge fees across the board to implement and supervise the laws and legislation. The proposed Bill that this Committee is considering for a heavy reduction of the licence fee for small hoteliers in remote and isolated areas is one that must recognise the vital importance that these licenced premises play in a small community.

As stated above it is our believe that we are far more than a small hotel . We are:-

- a Family Community Centre.
- a Drop In Centre for those seeking companionship
- a Play Centre for children as mothers meet.
- a Community Meeting Centre
- an Information Centre

The reason for mentioning these additional roles which hotels in remote areas willingly undertake is that these services are normally tax payer or charity funded facilities in larger centres.

As such it is our belief that this Committee should take into consideration the extra and vital roles of hotels in isolated

areas and as such the reduction of licence fees would not only be of enormous financial assistance but also an acknowledgement of the vital role these hotels make to a community in remote areas.

Yours faithfully

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