

Graham Fitch
Royal Mail Hotel
9 Achenar Street
Hungerford QLD 4493

12 May 2017

Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee
By email: lacsc@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam

Liquor (Rural Hotels Concession) Amendment Bill 2017

We refer to the introduction of the Liquor (Rural Hotels Concession) Amendment Bill 2017 by Mr Robbie Katter MP, and to your invitation for submissions from the public and stakeholders.

As you might be aware, RMLV training is mandatory for all licensees, nominees and applicants for an approved manager's license in Queensland. In addition, licensed premises are required to pay annual licensing fees to meet compliance requirements.

We are writing to you as the owners of the Royal Mail Hotel at Hungerford, Queensland, who are stakeholders in the consideration of this Bill.

The Royal Mail Hotel is a historic, heritage listed hotel built in 1873 located in the Shire of Bulloo. The small Hungerford township is home to 10 people and is located on the Queensland – New South Wales border, 190 km South West of Cunnamulla, and 216 km North West of Bourke NSW. We are also approximately 1000 km from Brisbane, Sydney and Adelaide with our main service centers being Toowoomba some 850 km away and Dubbo considerably closer at 580 km away.

The area central to Hungerford is approximately 40,000 square kilometers with an overall approximate population of 60 people. The road system to Hungerford is predominantly dirt and gravel roads with the three connecting main roads comprising of Thargomindah road which is a 165km stretch of red dirt road including approximately 30km of sealed road, the Eulo road which is a 117km combination of red dirt, gravel and small sections of bitumen, and the road connecting Bourke is a 216km stretch consisting of 170km of dirt road. These roads are subject to numerous closures when wet, preventing access to Hungerford from the connecting townships. The Paroo River crossing located in the town is also closed many times throughout the year due to flooding, sometimes for months at a time. The lack of access results in significant problems arising with dwindling supplies for the township as medicines, groceries, fuel and mail cannot reach the Hotel for distribution to the residents. Sometimes the only access is via plane into the town. In summer the high temperatures limit any tourists to the area. Recently we encountered temperatures above 40 degrees for 3 consecutive months.

Our working hours are approximately 15 to 17 hours per day, 7 days per week. Remuneration for this work equates to approximately \$5 to \$6 per hour with costs supplemented by the mail run which keeps the hotel functioning.

The Royal Mail Hotel's functions include the Australia postal service, recorder and transmitter of Bureau of Meteorology readings (rain and river), and is also the contact point for the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS), as well as the community meeting place. The Hotel voluntarily transports, stores and maintains the fuel needs for the RFDS planes as well as donating time and resources to the medical staff when they attend the monthly clinics and any emergencies.

Due to our remoteness and lack of resources in the area, we face many hardships due to access, as well as significant costs in transportation of town supplies and other services we provide at no cost. We also suffer hardship during the many road closures from incumbent weather that prevents tourists from reaching the hotel due to roads becoming inaccessible.

Whilst we happily take on the costs above, we find it inconceivable that we are required to pay licensing fees that are identical to the fees paid by the large corporations and franchise chains. Our customer base is not guaranteed and the large licensing fees expected of us each year eats in to our small takings.

As you may be aware hotels are required to have an RMLV (Registered Manager of Licensed venues) on call or on premises at all operating times. The RMLV operates for 5 years but is only legal with a current certificate of attainment which is valid for 3 years, therefore increasing costs considerably.

Our costs associated with maintaining and renewing an RMLV license is as follows:

	Description	Cost
1	Travel costs to Brisbane or Gold Coast 2000km @ 66c per kilometer	\$2,200.00
2	Accommodation and expenses for 3 days is equivalent to \$180 per day	\$ 540.00
3	Course fee	\$ 400.00
4	RMLV license fee	\$ 500.00
	Total for one license renewal (Note – we have two staff required to complete)	\$3,640.00

In addition, whilst we are completing the course, we have to hire a temporary manager during this time at a cost of \$4,000.00 to \$5,000.00 (including travel and salary). Whereas actual costs for hotel managers to participate in the course in a metropolitan area is likely to be less than \$1,000.00.

Further costs that we incur include the following:

1. Electricity – approximately \$20,000.00 per annum
2. Alcohol purchases
 - a. 2013 – 2014 financial year \$55,877.00
 - b. 2014 – 2015 financial year \$50,250.00
 - c. 2015 – 2016 financial year \$50,571.00
 - d. 2016 – 2017 YTD \$37,653.00

To report a local phone outage, we are required to travel 120 km to Eulo where we can establish mobile phone connection to report the fault to Telstra. It is not uncommon for Telstra to take more than 1 week to re-establish connections, particularly if a technician is required onsite.

We are sure you would appreciate the service that remote hotels/pubs provide to their respective townships and know that our sales vary considerably based on tourist's being able to access our respective towns in order to spend their money with us. We are not like the hotels and pubs located in large center's with thousands of patrons each year. For example, our yearly sales in liquor would be equivalent to the weekly sales made by the hotels and taverns owned by the ALH Group who currently own approximately 330 licensed venues and more than 550 liquor outlets across Australia. This company is in the business of making billions of dollars in profits, yet they pay the exact same licensing fees as the small remote venues starving for clientele.

To the committee members, we provide this service because we love what we do. We are always short staffed, over worked and are often forgotten by our government due to our remoteness. We are asking for your support to help make compliance and licensing requirements fair.

We thank you for the opportunity to voice our concerns and we look forward to your reply in due course.

Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me on [REDACTED] or 07 4655 4093, or via email [REDACTED].

Yours sincerely
Royal Mail Hotel

Graham L Fitch

Graham Fitch
Owner