



Speech by

PHIL REEVES

MEMBER FOR MANSFIELD

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LIQUOR AMENDMENT BILL

Mr REEVES (Mansfield—ALP) (2.30 p.m.): It is a great pleasure to speak on this bill. I congratulate the minister on introducing it. I also congratulate her on the great work that she is doing in this portfolio and in the area of liquor licensing. I take a moment to congratulate the previous minister who took a great interest in this bill and was responsible for the national competition policy review. I had the pleasure of going on a study trip with him to Sydney to look at the effects of the bill. I am sure that he will be pleased to know that it will be passed today.

The bill makes a number of recommendations and changes because of the national competition policy review. Some of the major changes will affect club licences. The abolition of the current 18 litres per member per day limit on takeaway sales will mean that members will be able to purchase unlimited takeaway liquor from their club. For those involved in the club industry, this has been a weird issue. I am sure that many clubs—perhaps not intentionally—may not always have followed the rules to the letter of the law.

Let us think about this for a moment. If someone holding a family function such as a 21st birthday party wanted to buy the alcohol from their local club, the 18-litre rule made that impossible. For instance, it was impossible for a club to sell a member an 18-gallon keg—I think they are 40 litres now. The 18 litre per day rule was unrealistic. The bill allows more freedom in this regard. Why shouldn't club members be able to purchase takeaway liquor from their own club?

The bill stops clubs from taking advantage of this relaxation of the rule to become drive-in liquor stores. That is not the purpose of a club. The purpose of a club is to provide a service to its members. One of those services may be to provide liquor in the form of takeaway liquor. However, a club should not then promote itself as a drive-in bottle department. That is not the role of clubs; it is the role of pubs.

Another impact of the bill that will have a great impact on clubs is the reduction in the current distance for casual visitors from 40 kilometres to 15 kilometres. In my area alone, there would be a number of liquor establishments within 40 kilometres. However, as I live on the south side, I would not regard myself as a casual visitor to clubs on the north side, for example. It was a ridiculous to have a 40 kilometre rule. The reduction to 15 kilometres is a bit more realistic. That may even give clubs more opportunity to promote themselves.

A couple of years ago I had the pleasure of reopening a club in the electorate of the member for Mount Gravatt, the Southern Cross Sports Club, formerly the Mount Gravatt Sporting and Workers Club. With the opening of the busway, that club may be able to promote itself to northsiders because it is only 16 kilometres from the city.

Mr Neil Roberts: Have you been for a ride on the busway?

Mr REEVES: Yes, I have. Being the No. 1 ticket holder, I understand that. These are sensible changes to the Liquor Act. The bill amends some peculiar rules, which will help the operation of clubs in the future.

Another aspect of the bill that I would like to speak about is the push by the supermarket industry to sell liquor. I visited Sydney and northern New South Wales with the previous minister and we looked at some of the supermarket chains that were selling takeaway liquor. One place in

particular—the member for Cairns may be able to help me out, but I think it may have been Cessnock—highlighted what could happen in country areas. We walked into a supermarket and next to the groceries was the liquor. There was no difference. The person behind the counter, who appeared to be the only person there, was a 15 or 16 year old girl. That would happen particularly in country and regional areas.

Ms Boyle: In breach of New South Wales legislation.

Mr REEVES: Yes, but some of these are probably family businesses and they employ family members. As far as I am concerned, selling liquor is a specialist job. Opening it up to supermarkets would create problems, particularly in country areas where there are small operations.

I support national competition policy and I believe that the public support it. I had the pleasure of attending an information session for one of the Neighbourhood Watch groups in my area. There were about 65 residents there. We explained the changes to the Liquor Act. At the end of the session, I took a quick poll. Of the 65 people present, 60 did not think that supermarkets should have the right to sell liquor. Only five people wanted that extra convenience.

Brisbane is a perfect example of why it is unnecessary for supermarkets to sell liquor. I cannot name one shopping centre that does not have a takeaway liquor bottle shop based at a pub within five or six shops of Woolworths or Coles. The convenience is already there; the service is already there. There is a push for this by some members of the retail sector because they want it all. They want to sell newspapers, petrol—they want the lot. It is unrealistic. What they do not understand, and I do not think they will ever understand, is that selling liquor is a specialised job, and that is the way that it should be.

The bill also changes the rules governing adult entertainment permits—AEPs. Recently a number of administrative amendments were made to introduce the provision to regulate the conduct of adult entertainment on licensed premises. It allows licensees to have more than one approved entertainment area on the premises. This is particularly necessary where a nightclub comprises a number of floors in a building. The provision will ensure that each area is properly controlled.

Additionally, in relation to approved hours the bill will make it clear that the chief executive can approve AEP hours which are less than the premises' normal liquor licensing trading hours. It confirms that minors cannot be anywhere in any area where adult entertainment is performed. That prohibition includes staff and performers. That is an excellent improvement.

The bill provides a show-cause procedure for holders of adult entertainment permits who, during the course of the permit, through their actions, criminal charges or linkages with undesirable associates, are later considered to be unsuitable to hold a permit. The bill will ensure the authority of the adult entertainment permits does not extend to a licensee's 'catering away' approval. Thus the licensee cannot provide liquor and strippers for private functions away from the licensee's primary premises.

One of the other aspects of the bill that I wish to speak about is noise nuisance. I have been a strong advocate in this House and elsewhere for the music precinct in Fortitude Valley. This bill goes some way towards addressing this.

For those who are not aware, I point out that the Fortitude Valley area has become a great music venue frequented by many people. This use has developed over many years. However, residential units have now been built close to these venues. The people who purchased these units were fully aware that these venues were operating there. After the fact they now want to say that these premises should not be conducting that business. I do not think that is fair. That is not reasonable.

Time and time again members of parliament get people knocking on their door complaining about X, Y, Z premises which might have been there for 10 or 20 years. They were operating well before people bought a nearby house or a unit, yet the residents still complain. People have to consider all their options. If they do not want the noise of city life, and in particular that from the music venues in Fortitude Valley, they should not buy there.

Mr Lawlor: Go to Mansfield.

Mr REEVES: They should come out to the beautiful calm surrounds of Mansfield.

A government member: With fabulous public transport into the city.

Mr REEVES: Yes, it has great public transport infrastructure.

Investigators under the Liquor Act may issue notices for a noise nuisance from licensed premises to be diminished or ceased. The bill seeks to include further particulars which investigators must have regard to when issuing these notices. These include the order of occupancy between the licensee and the complainant—as I mentioned before in relation to the music venues in the Valley—changes to the licensee premises and the complainant's premises over time, and changes in the activities conducted on licensed premises.

Obviously, as I said, they were there before. If the licensee wants to change the whole level of operation, that has to be taken into consideration. These issues have become very relevant, as I said,

particularly in areas like Fortitude Valley, which is a music and entertainment precinct and where new residential units are being constructed. The amendments do not mean that complaints will be disregarded. Rather, these are additional issues to consider when deliberating on whether to issue a noise nuisance notice. This is particularly important, given the resurgence of residential accommodation within traditional commercial zones. Noise limits and standards will be specified within the regulation.

I also think it is important that councils wake up to the fact that, if they are going to give zoning applications to residential premises, they should realise the nature of the area. They need to put in place stricter guidelines on the construction of premises.

Before I conclude, I wish to speak about the changes to the bill which eliminate the need for clubs to apply for general purpose permits to sell liquor for areas on playing fields attached to a club or any other location. I have been involved in clubs for a number of years, especially sporting clubs. We would invariably say, 'What areas have we got licensed? I think we only have the clubhouse licensed. That means we have to get another licence for the footy field. We have got a game on this Sunday. Can we get that licence?' It was unmanageable, especially considering that a lot of the boards were voluntary and the sporting clubs ran separate committees. It is my understanding that this amendment will allow the club and the playing fields all to be licensed for the purpose of selling liquor when there is a certain sporting event. Obviously, it will not allow someone to sell takeaway liquor from the old famous 'pig shed'. It is an important and practical change.

As I said, I commend the minister for reintroducing this bill. As a person who has a strong interest in the liquor industry, I congratulate the minister on the change and I look forward to it being passed. I will make a further comment about the wine industry later.
