



Speech by

PHIL REEVES

MEMBER FOR MANSFIELD

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WINE INDUSTRY AMENDMENT BILL

Mr REEVES (Mansfield—ALP) (4.46 p.m.): It gives me great pleasure to support this bill. I congratulate the minister on introducing the Wine Industry Amendment Bill. I must admit that I do not like to drink wine.

Mr Springborg: You can catch a bus to the wineries.

Mr REEVES: People can catch a bus to the wineries. In fact, I once caught a bus to the wineries. I went on a study tour with the former minister to have a look at the impact of the wine industry. On that occasion we caught a bus to the wineries. I must say that I had little or no knowledge of the wine industry until I went on that study tour. It still did not change my lack of enthusiasm for wine. However, I was impressed not just by the marketing side of the industry but also its tourism potential. I believe it is an industry that will continue to expand in Queensland.

For many years Stanthorpe has been renowned for its wine. The Burnett area also has an ever-growing industry. On that study tour I got to meet some of the winemaking families who have been there for generations. I learned of their achievements, not only in the wine industry but also in the tourism industry. Their linkage with the horse breeding industry was interesting. There are similar linkages in the Stanthorpe area. This is an industry which will obviously expand, and hopefully this legislation will facilitate that expansion.

Currently, no wine may be sold under a licence unless it has been made from the fruit grown by the licensee or it has been made by the licensee in Queensland. Operators using contract growers and makers or blending parcels of wine are not eligible for a licence under the act. The existing licence type is to remain as a wine producer licence. The key change to eligibility for this licence is that an operator must grow the fruit used to make the wine at the licensed premises or must make the wine at the licensed premises. In other words, a wine producer must have a vineyard or a winery.

A wine merchant licence is to be introduced to cover operators conducting other wine industry-related businesses. This new licence type recognises that there are activities other than traditional winemaking, which can add value to the Queensland wine industry but which have previously not been allowed to take place. To be eligible for a wine merchant licence, a business must be contributing to the Queensland wine industry in a substantial way.

The act will contain examples of practices that will be acceptable, including buying fruit grown in the state and having it made into wine in the state, growing fruit that will later be used to make wine but using contract fruit and winemaking facilities in the meantime, and blending parcels of wine to create a unique wine. There are also examples of practices that would not be acceptable, including buying bulk wine from outside of the state and bottling it, and selling only other people's wine. The intention of the merchant licence is to provide opportunities for entrepreneurial activities that contribute to the overall growth of the Queensland wine industry. It is not intended as a back door to retail wine shops or to retail sales of wine from supermarkets.

It was not until we studied this bill that I realised the amount of wine that is sold at wineries. The largest majority of wine sales are actually to people who inspect wineries and buy wine there. Unfortunately, the former minister bought me a couple of bottles of wine—the only wine that I thought tasted any good—and then he misled me. They did not arrive, but that is another story.

Wine producers will operate under similar conditions to current licensees. They will be able to sell their wine for takeaway purposes or as a sample. With approval they will be able to sell wine for consumption on the premises or sell wine at other premises that can operate as a remote cellar door. They will also be able, with approval, to sell wine other than their own, including blends, provided that they do not sell more of that other wine than their own wine in a given year.

A wine merchant licence will authorise the sale of wine for takeaway purposes or as a sample. With approval, wine merchants will be able to sell their wines for consumption on the premises. However, they will not be able to operate remote cellar doors as wine producers can, as the amendment to section 9 requires that a wine merchant licence must relate to only one premises. The provision will prevent supermarkets or other retail chains from setting up one token wine business and operating statewide through defacto remote cellar doors.

Wine producers will continue to be able to have multiple nominees to control their premises. This is because they are able to operate remote cellar doors and, therefore, need authorised people in control of each premises under this licence. Wine merchants who can operate only one premises under this licence are entitled to only one nominee, as with all other liquor licences.

This bill allows wine producers to open from 8 a.m. as of right at their main licensed premises. Many licensees carried this starting time over from the repealed 1974 legislation and it more closely reflects the operating times of primary production and agriculture business. Wine merchants and remote cellar doors operated by wine producers can open at 10 a.m. These businesses are less likely to be in rural locations than wine producers' main premises. Extended trading hours may be applied for. All premises will have until midnight as the ordinary closing time, with the ability to extend trading hours if necessary. Although few wine licensees in Australia trade after 5 p.m., the later trading hours allow them to conduct functions or other special events if required. This will be an important aspect of growing the link between the tourism industry and the wine industry, as it will allow flexibility in trading times.

Only wine producers may apply for and be granted a promotional permit to sell their wine away from their main premises at one-off events. These provisions have also been clarified to confirm the temporary nature of these permits. They are intended for use at single events only, and the chief executive must be satisfied that a permit is more appropriate than a permanent licence.

Also, the bill amends the legislation to clarify that the sale of any wine that is not authorised by the licence is an offence. Given that the legislative framework rests upon what wines can and cannot be sold by licensees, this offence is central to ensuring the act's integrity.

The bill also amends the legislation to allow licensees to be absent from the premises for up to 28 days without seeking the chief executive's permission, provided that the premises are left in the control of an employee or agent. If the licensee is to be absent for more than 28 days, the approved nominee must assume management of the business. That makes sense.

In recognition of the fact that wine merchant licences may result in industry expansion to more urban locations, the legislation is amended to increase the powers of investigators. Currently they have most of the same powers as contained in the Liquor Act, and this will be expanded to include the power to require the abatement of nuisance and/or dangerous activity. In particular, this power is necessary to control any noise nuisance that may be created.

This bill should be supported by everyone in the House, and I believe that it will be. It will help with the growth of the wine industry in Queensland. As I have indicated, the study tour that I undertook with the former minister and the member for Cairns educated me about the wine industry. Laurie Longland, the Executive Director of the Liquor Licensing Division came along, and he has a great deal of knowledge about the industry. No doubt the passage of this legislation will mark the start of a further boom for the wine industry in Queensland.
