



Speech by

# STUART COPELAND

## MEMBER FOR CUNNINGHAM

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Hansard 31 May 2001

### WINE INDUSTRY AMENDMENT BILL

**Mr COPELAND** (Cunningham—NPA) (5.48 p.m.): I have much pleasure in joining in this debate. Like the member for Redlands said, it could be forgotten that there are many areas in this state that are producing wine and getting into the wine industry in a very big way. My electorate is one of those. The southern Darling Downs and Darling Downs area is producing a lot of wine now, and there is an enormous amount of investment going into that area. I am very happy to have that industry in my electorate.

As many members have said, this is an emerging industry. It is an industry that is bringing hope and diversification to many areas that really needed it—areas such as the South Burnett and the Darling Downs, which have been through some fairly tough patches; but now this emerging industry is coming into play.

Obviously, the Queensland wine industry is quite different from that of the other states, even though there has been a wine industry in this state for a very, very long time. I think the first winery was established on the north side of Brisbane 140-odd years ago, from memory, and the Romavilla Winery at Roma has been producing wines continuously for over 100 years. So it is a long tradition. But I guess the best known of the wine areas is the Granite Belt, which the member for Southern Downs has gone into in some detail. It has been seen really as a bit of a niche market, a boutique market, and I guess that is a very valuable part of the market, and certainly part of the market that some of the wineries in my electorate are getting involved in. But there are commercial quantities also being developed. The operators in the south Burnett—for example, the Clovelly Estate, those sorts of very large investment wineries—are putting together some very good wines that will be produced in large quantities, commercial quantities, in the very near future.

The Australian wine industry has performed very well internationally. The member for Logan has detailed some of its achievements. I know it brings great pride when we can go overseas and boast that we have some of the finest wines in the world. The UK market, for example, is almost dominated by Australian wines now, which is a great achievement. It will take some time for the Queensland wine industry to be able to take part in that major commercial activity overseas, but certainly being able to make inroads into those markets is a valuable contribution.

There is actually only one winery operating within the Cunningham electorate. It is called Vale View Winery. It is a great winery. John and Hazel Chersini operate it. It is a new winery. They are developing their own wines. Even though it is new, it is already producing some terrific wines. It is a great place to stop. Right around the boundary of the electorate and literally on the boundary across the road, there are places like Preston Peak Winery. It is an absolutely magnificent winery. It is right on the escarpment of the Toowoomba range and looks out over Tabletop Mountain and the Lockyer Valley. I know there are some chardonnay socialists sitting in this parliament who would love to come and partake of the eminently drinkable '97 chardonnay that Preston Peak produces and take in that view and one of the terrific platters that they do for lunch.

I extend an official and unofficial invitation to any of the members present who would like to come to our area and drive around all of the wineries. It is a very nice day out. If it is on an official visit, I am very happy to take people around them. If it is on an unofficial visit, I am also happy to take people around them. I have made a study tour of these wineries, and I know them all very well.

There is the Old Gowrie development, which is not on line yet but is an absolutely massive investment. Along the highway between Toowoomba and Dalby, at Charlton, there is a very historic 130 year old homestead called Old Gowrie, which is a beautiful place. Ron and Marie Newbery purchased that property a couple of years ago and have put a huge amount of investment in. They have got a large area under grapes and have done it in the best possible way. It will be an absolutely magnificent

addition to the Queensland wine industry. If anyone is driving up there, I know that Ron and Marie would be more than happy to welcome you into their winery and give you a tour of the place.

There is also Governor's Choice Winery at Westbrook, run by Jamie and Liz Yeates. They are doing a terrific job. I know the minister opened that winery last year. I was present on that occasion. I am sure the minister will concur that they also put out a very fine drop and have wonderful views up through the Darling Downs and back towards Toowoomba.

There is Rimfire Winery at Maclagan, which is also very well known for the Angus steaks that they serve in their cafe.

**Mr Hayward:** Are you bringing any product to the parliament for a tasting?

**Mr COPELAND:** I would love to bring the product into parliament, but unfortunately not much of it makes it back! Rimfire does an excellent job. All five of those wineries are within a very easy drive and a visit to them all makes for a wonderful day out.

It just goes to prove that there are a lot of things going on in the state. A lot of the members have mentioned where the wine industry is starting to develop—the Granite Belt, South Burnett, St George, Roma and those sorts of areas. Riversands Vineyards are doing some terrific things out there. There are also wineries in the Gold Coast hinterland—

**Mr English:** Mount Cotton.

**Mr Mickel:** Mount Tamborine.

**Mr COPELAND:** Mount Tamborine, and of course Mount Cotton, as the member for Redlands said. One of the ones I was previously unaware of is up at Gladstone at Gecko Valley, which the member for Gladstone highlighted before. I knew the wine but I did not know that it was actually from Gladstone. So it has been a learning experience for all of us.

At the moment the wine industry is relying quite heavily on niche markets. That is quite a feasible business to be in. It is a terrific business to be in. The cellar-door sales mostly take precedence for these wineries that I have been talking about, and that is how the bulk of the wines are sold. They are producing relatively small commercial volumes.

I am very happy to support this bill, because it introduces more flexibility to assist these wineries and also other people who are making a contribution to the wine industry to enable them to continue to develop. I think that is a wonderful thing, not only for the wine industry but also for the economy in Queensland, the employment that it generates and the prosperity that it generates in a lot of areas right around the state.

I have one question that I ask the minister to clarify. Perhaps the committee stage is the more appropriate time to do that as opposed to her reply. In her second reading speech, she stated—

A wine merchant licence may only be granted to an operator whose business will contribute to the Queensland wine industry in a substantial way.

I am sure the minister would be aware that there are some real difficulties and some very big grey areas about how to exactly define 'the Queensland industry'. I am sure the minister would be aware of some of the problems that a number of the wine shows have had, for example, in determining whether or not a wine is eligible for Queensland judging. There are cases where people have produced grapes in Queensland and sent them over the border to be made into wine, or imported some wine to be blended with wine in Queensland. There may be grapes that are produced in Queensland but go just over the border to Ballandean or somewhere like that. I know there are a couple of instances where there are winemakers just south of the border, but to all intents and purposes they are Queenslanders. I think it is a grey area that is very difficult to define. Perhaps the minister can clarify it for me later.

The other industry that goes along with the wine industry and has been touched on by a number of members is the tourism industry. As I said, a lot of people have mentioned the Granite Belt and the brass monkey season, which has been a phenomenally successful promotion for them and is a great time to go down there. The member for Callide mentioned the wine trail in the South Burnett. The same thing is happening in Toowoomba and on the Darling Downs. The Toowoomba and Golden West Regional Tourism Authority has done a great job with some of its promotions. I note that one which is just finishing is called the leaf peeping season. Madam Deputy Speaker, you look at me strangely. Toowoomba is one of the few places where you can actually go and watch the leaves on the trees change colour. It is a magnificent time of year in Toowoomba, and this has been a very successful promotion for them. It is now expanding into becoming a City of Seasons promotion and those sorts of things. That ties in with people coming to visit and taking advantage of the wineries that are around us and also taking advantage of some of the wonderful bed and breakfasts, like Vacy Hall, which is another beautiful old homestead in Toowoomba operated by Maryanne Anderson, who is a wonderful and generous host. I am sure she would be more than happy to welcome any members to her home in Russell Street in Toowoomba.

The other promotion that is coming in—and I think it all ties together in terms of promoting local produce—is the Signature Dish Competition that concluded last Saturday. I was at the final of the Signature Dish Competition for Toowoomba in Grand Central on Saturday, where they had the cook-off for the three chefs who made the final. A lot of chefs took part in that competition, and the winner was a chef from Crown Restaurant and Oyster Bar, who did a dish with lamb. The second and third place-

getters were both dishes that were made from silver perch that were produced in an aquaculture venture at Millmerran. So all of these things are starting to tie in, and I think it is becoming a very good promotional tool, not only for Toowoomba but also for all of the areas that do a similar sort of promotion.

The Royal Agricultural Society of Queensland introduced last year a Toowoomba Royal Wine Show. I think that wine shows are a very valuable part of promoting and developing the wine industry and—more specifically, probably—the skills in the wine industry.

I think it was the member for Southern Downs who mentioned earlier that professional winemakers are now being employed in a lot of the wineries around Queensland. That is terrific, because it is bringing some very specific skills to the industry. The wine show circuit assists with that, as it teaches judging skills, helps winemakers compare wines from different areas—not only within the state but within the country—and teaches them what goes into making a good wine and the difference between a good wine and a bad wine.

There are a lot of wine shows around. There is the Brisbane Royal Wine Show, the Sheraton *Courier-Mail* Wine Show, the Cairns Wine Show, the Small Winemakers Wine Show in Stanthorpe and, of course, the Toowoomba Wine Show, which I think was the first wine show to be held there last year.

Taking advantage of the geographical location of Toowoomba can help a lot of developing wine areas. Toowoomba is quite strategically located and is within easy access of the Granite Belt, South Burnett, Roma, the Darling Downs, the Gold Coast hinterland and Brisbane. It has a very large role to play. I am thankful that the Department for State Development continues to base a wine development officer in the Toowoomba office of the department. That person is doing a terrific job in helping to develop winemaking skills and the wine industry, and assisting in dealings with the government. I commend the government for continuing that position in Toowoomba.

To finish, I would like to touch on a point raised by the member for Callide regarding the parliamentary wine. The member for Callide is incredibly complimentary. It is a trait that he is known for. He said that this was quite a good drop. I have to say that it is a pretty average drop. It is not a particularly good wine. There is no doubt in the world that there are wines being produced in Queensland that leave this for dead.

It is good to see that in the parliamentary dining room and the Strangers Dining Room there are Queensland wines for sale. Robinsons champagne is one of the best champagnes in Australia. It is a fantastic sparkling wine. There are other good wines too, such as the Ballandean Estate wines. The Ballandean Estate 1994 Sylvaner won the gold medal and champion wine at last year's Toowoomba Royal Show. I believe that it is the most awarded Queensland wine that has been produced. From memory—and I will stand to be corrected on this—it has won the champion dessert wine at the *Courier-Mail* Wine Show in Brisbane, held at the Sheraton Hotel, for 16 years in a row. That is a fine achievement for any wine, let alone a Queensland wine. I congratulate Angelo on the terrific work that he has done. He is a real pioneer in producing Queensland wines.

I, too, would lobby the Speaker of the House on this matter. Madam Deputy Speaker, I ask you to pass on to Mr Speaker the message that two of us have enunciated—and I think we were joined by the member for Logan—that is, that the parliament's labelled wine should be a Queensland wine. There are plenty of good Queensland wines to choose from. There are plenty of good Queensland wines that are produced in commercial quantities. That would be a great addition to this House. The first time I was in the dining room, I was incredibly surprised to see that the wine was from New South Wales. I do not think that that would be an unusual reaction at all. We should look seriously at changing that. I commend this bill to the House.

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