




Speech By
James Lister

MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS

Record of Proceedings, 26 February 2019

LIQUOR (RURAL HOTELS CONCESSION) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (6.28 pm): I rise to speak on the Liquor (Rural Hotels Concession) Amendment Bill and I, too, thank the member for Traeger for introducing this bill. It is a good bill but, as the member for Southern Downs, I have to say that it does not go far enough. There has been some variation in the degree of anticipation of amendments allowed today. I will not test you on that, Mr Deputy Speaker Whiting. Suffice to say that I will be very keen to have something to say about the amendment which has been circulated in the name of the shadow Attorney-General, the member for Toowoomba South.

I want to acknowledge some of the small pubs in my electorate that are doing it extremely tough. They do not have to be in Birdsville. A geographic determination is not good enough in the case of some of these pubs. I refer to the Royal Hotel in Leyburn and the Maryvale Crown Hotel run by Mick and Annie, and I have had plenty of beers there. I refer also to the Killarney Hotel, the Blue Cow run by Denise near Allora and the Ballandean Tavern, newly taken over by Naomi and Stephen. They were doing a great job during the fires.

There is also the Oasis Hotel in Yelarbon. Chris and Mick have hosted me there on many occasions. I have stayed the night. There is the Karara tavern, which is run by Peter. There is also the Coronation Hotel at Toobeah, which is run by Michael and Stacy. Michael Offerdahl has had a lot of input into this matter. There is the Talwood Hotel, run by Eric, and the Victory Hotel, run by the Volz family, up at Cecil Plains. I emphasise that these hotels are small businesses that are run by mums and dads who work every hour God sends—and a few besides—to employ people, to make a living for themselves and to provide a vital service in their communities. There is nothing in Toobeah apart from a couple of houses and the pub. That pub is the centre of that district—from the cotton farms in the south to the broadacre grain and cattle producers in the north.

If there is no pub, there is no community. Those pubs face extraordinarily high energy costs. Because of the terrible drought that we are suffering in the Southern Downs electorate, the number of people who are coming in to buy their food, to stay the night and have a drink is down. The same could be said for pretty much all of these pubs. They are doing it tough. They not should be paying the same licensing costs as the Victory Hotel in Brisbane pays, or even the Birdsville pub which, although in a very remote and dry spot, is probably a tourist attraction and is doing all right on its own. The operators of country pubs are struggling. I would like to see the provisions of the bill expanded to enable smaller pubs that are doing it tough because of the drought to be able to access a concessional rate.

I have been told that some of these pubs are paying \$6,000 per annum in fees. A lot of beer and a lot of Mars bars have to be sold and a lot of people have to stay the night to recoup that money. I think that is exorbitant. It is unfair on pubs that are doing it tough, but provide a community service. Many operators of these pubs see their role not just as small business people but also as providing a vital community service in their community. They are proud of that. We need to get on board with them to make sure that they are not disadvantaged and that we protect rural communities from the loss of

pubs. If the pub in Toobeah, or Maryvale, or Talwood, or Cecil Plains is lost, the community is one step closer to leaving. I support the bill. I will certainly have something to say about the amendments. I commend the bill to the House.