




Speech By  
**Jessica Pugh**

**MEMBER FOR MOUNT OMMANEY**

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**JUSTICE AND OTHER LEGISLATION (COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE)  
AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Ms PUGH** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (4.30 pm): I rise today to make a brief contribution regarding the part 9 amendment of the Liquor Act 1992 within the provisions of the bill. I do so as somebody who has a deep understanding of the hospitality industry. As I have said before in this House, it is something I have been involved in my entire life. It has supported my family for my entire life, and it is something about which I feel very strongly. It is a real pleasure to rise to speak to these provisions today. I know that, when we announced that restaurants and businesses had to close and do takeaway only, there was a lot of concern from restaurateurs and retailers who have always relied on the sale of food and liquor to support their business that it was going to be really tough to make ends meet. It is fantastic that this section has allowed those small businesses that pivoted to takeaway so beautifully to sell food and liquor as well.

As a former restaurant manager, I know firsthand from seeing our own restaurant books that, for a lot of venues, this could be the difference between survival and failure. For many venues, liquor is the profit margin. Food is comparatively expensive to produce thanks to labour costs but, of course, there is also the potential for really high wastage. The amount of love and care that goes into making an item of food compared to pouring a glass of wine or making a cocktail is, of course, much higher but, as I said, there are those wastage issues to contend with as well.

Clause 37 inserts a new part 10A, 'Takeaway liquor authorities for COVID-19 emergency response', into the Liquor Act. The new part 10A contains those new sections 235A to 235J in providing that the main purposes of new part 10A is to support that ongoing viability of businesses operating licensed premises which, of course, have been so disrupted by the COVID-19 emergency.

As I said, when many venues turned to takeaway only, they were really deeply concerned about how they would not only make a profit but survive in this current environment. One of the many value-adds that we know a lot of restaurants offer is pairing together the beverage and the food. That is the point of difference that they can offer compared to making a really nice meal yourself or picking something up at Dan Murphy's.

As I mentioned earlier, they also have those wastage issues when it comes to food, which does contribute to that lower profit margin. If you are lucky, you turn the food over. If you are unlucky, it goes in the bin or, hopefully, if there is that food wastage you are smart and kind enough to turn that over to a charity like OzHarvest. Luckily, vodka does not go bad. Small operators have an opportunity to turn their craft into making delectable cocktails and other higher profit margin items like alcohol based dessert. It gives them another string to their bow when it comes to fighting against the economic downturn caused by COVID-19.

This commonsense approach has been welcomed by venues throughout Queensland. I know that it is based on feedback from small businesses like Bare Bones Society in Jindalee that was lucky enough to participate in the Premier's round table for hospitality operators. It also allows licensed venues to continue to sell their most profitable items to a willing public who still want to purchase those

items and it allows them to whittle down those existing stock lines. It means that money they spent a few months ago in anticipation of a good autumn season is not going to waste or sitting as unspent funds. It means they can turn that money they have already spent if not into profit then certainly into an income stream while they get through this tough time.

I already have seen restaurants in my local community and small businesses do some incredibly innovative work with these rules and opportunities. Many locals like nothing better than eating out to celebrate a special occasion but, of course, we have seen during the most restrictive times that we could not even have a picnic in the park. Our local venues like Bare Bones Society did a great job in coming up with innovative heat-and-eat options. I certainly took advantage of that. I had a picnic in my backyard. It was super fantastic, but we make do with what we can. As I said, this change allows local venues to continue retailing their most high-profit item. It is the most high-profit item that they sell. It gives them a much better chance at recovery. I commend the bill to the House.