




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR SOUTH BRISBANE

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**JUSTICE LEGISLATION (COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE—PERMANENCY)
AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Dr MacMAHON** (South Brisbane—Grn) (3.23 pm): I rise to speak to elements of this bill that will directly impact residents of South Brisbane, the hospitality sector that has suffered so much during this pandemic and the broader Queensland community. The COVID period, devastating for so many, gave us insight into what a world would look like where governments actively worked to improve people's lives. People sleeping rough were given housing. JobKeeper and JobSeeker were at adequate levels for people to live with dignity, and businesses and governments invested in online platforms to improve accessibility and connection. The domestic violence measures in this bill allowing remote access to justice processes are welcome and vital.

The bill amends the Liquor Act 1992 to permanently retain aspects of the temporary COVID-19 takeaway liquor arrangements for licensed restaurants. Licensees will have to establish systems and procedures for the responsible service of alcohol. For many small bars and restaurants in South Brisbane, the ability to sell takeaway alcohol has been a lifeline while normal operations have been restricted. Small bar operators have said to me that the capacity to sell takeaway alcohol has been incredibly important and has saved businesses and protected staff from unemployment. I note that the permanent provisions only extend to venues selling takeaway meals, excluding venues with bar licences and excluding beer, which was a key concern for a number of submitters.

I note the valid concerns from the drug and alcohol support sector around the increased availability of alcohol and the risk of alcohol abuse. The COVID crisis has pressured so many existing fault lines in our society, and none more so than the prevalence of mental ill health and drug and alcohol addiction in our society. I acknowledge the points made in the submission by the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education in relation to this bill. However, the answers to societal issues of precarious mental health and drug and alcohol addiction do not lie in preventing small retailers from selling craft beer or craft spirits. There are certainly things that parliament can do to support better mental health in the community, including better access to health, housing and education services. I will keep pushing for these.

Rather, these measures restricting small retailers from selling craft beer and craft spirits do nothing more than help maintain the monopoly on alcohol sales held by supermarkets and major chains like Coles, Woolworths, Metcash and Aldi. These huge corporations also have the monopoly on advertising that helps drive alcohol abuse and are able to sell alcohol at cheaper prices. Supermarkets hold 40 per cent of the packaged alcohol market and have been increasing their market share at the expense of independent retailers. The exclusion of beer and premixed alcohol drinks just ensures BWS and Dan Murphy's maintain a market stranglehold for beer, wine and spirits which people can buy with very few restrictions at big retailers without the need for a meal. I would much rather get my Christmas drinks at somewhere like The End in West End—a small, much loved local bar—than a megachain like Dan Murphy's.

We welcome measures to allow nurse practitioners to sign a certificate which forms part of an advance health directive. Nurse practitioners are highly skilled healthcare professionals. I note calls by the Australian College of Nurse Practitioners and the QNMU to further expand the role of nurse practitioners in Queensland. The QNMU suggests that there may be an opportunity to expand the scope of nurse practitioners to enable assessments for other types of documents which the committee has declined to take up. This is particularly disappointing knowing the immense stress that our health system will be facing in a month's time when we open up, the stress already being put on healthcare workers to do more with less and the underfunding of our hospitals.

I also note that the bill extends commercial lease emergency regulations to protect commercial lessees. As stated in the committee report, the initial explanatory notes state—

Overriding landlords ordinary property rights is justified by the need to respond to the financial hardship being experienced by some tenants due to closures and restrictions on movement and social distancing which the COVID-19 emergency has caused (and will continue to cause) and to provide a fair sharing of the burden of the pandemic between landlords and tenants.

It is telling that the government has not defended the property rights of lessors for commercial leases as vigorously and viciously as they did for residential leases. The stakes are so much higher for residential tenants who risk eviction or homelessness if they struggle to pay their rent. The government's priorities are clear. The government have proven themselves to be wholly unwilling to do anything to help Queensland tenants even in the midst of a housing crisis. Queensland renters deserve caps on rent increases. They deserve to make minor modifications and they deserve a real end to no-grounds evictions.