




Speech By
Jessica Pugh

MEMBER FOR MOUNT OMMANEY

Record of Proceedings, 9 March 2021

LIQUOR (ARTISAN LIQUOR) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms PUGH** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (4.06 pm): Queensland has long been known as the food bowl of Australia, producing fantastic agricultural produce—from carrots in Kalbar all the way to coffee beans in Far North Queensland. Indeed, in my former life at Restaurant Il we had just begun to stock some of the fantastic Queensland boutique liquors on offer from Far North Queensland. However, I do note that COVID-19 supercharged the natural evolution of this burgeoning industry and many breweries like Sumner's very own White Lies expanded from craft beers into a craft distillery as well, and some even took a temporary sojourn into hand sanitiser. Parts of the hospitality industry, as we know and as we have heard, have been very hard hit by COVID-19 and this legislation will go a long way towards giving these craft breweries and distilleries easier access to additional markets.

One of the key innovations of this bill is the ability for these boutique retailers to sell and take orders online, and that is fantastic. I do note the concerns raised by some stakeholders particularly around the need to safeguard against excessive drinking with regard to the impacts of the bill. I do believe that that has been well addressed in the end result and I am glad that we took the time to get that right. My general experience after working behind the bar in a high-end venue is that if somebody wants to drink to excess they would rarely select the artisan option. Rather, they would usually economise and go for the cheaper options. For this reason, this is specifically aimed at items that are artisan, high end, small scale and not cheap to purchase. Compared to major producers, artisan producers are not in a position to offer those lower prices that are attractive to binge drinkers, as many studies have shown, and that is a good thing.

Craft brewers rightfully raised concerns that the benefits in these bills should not extend to those seemingly small craft breweries which are owned by large multinational companies that may own several. This legislation ensures that larger companies will not be able to take advantage of these changes through so-called 'craft washing' their products by marketing their products as a craft brewing option when they are part of a large portfolio and hold a significant portfolio of beverages.

This is important for two reasons: firstly, large multinationals are in a position to be able to offer lower prices on their boutique beverage options because of the economies of scale that they have in their production, their marketing, so on and so forth. This would potentially make their product more attractive to binge drinkers. It would also have the twin negative impact of the lower prices of non-genuine craft brewers compared to genuine ones and that would put genuine craft brewers at a market disadvantage. That is not the desired effect. We have taken the time to get this legislation right and address that concern. I know that craft brewers and craft distillers will be pleased that this concern has been clearly addressed in the legislation.

As I said earlier, concerns were also raised about easier access to alcohol as a result of provisions in the bill. We all know that alcohol addiction is a serious issue. These concerns were weighed carefully in considering the legislation being introduced. I believe that the legislation gets the balance right between removing red tape and ensuring that problem drinkers do not have ready access to excessive amounts of cheap alcohol.

Like many members in the House, in my view genuine craft breweries and distilleries, like the aforementioned White Lies brewery in my electorate of Mount Ommaney, are not venues that encourage binge drinking, nor are their products pitched at a price that encourages binge drinking. White Lies Brewing is located in a suburban industrial estate. They welcome families with attractions aimed at young kids, such as giant Jenga games, pinball machines and a lot of board games. They also welcome pets. They very much encourage families to come down and celebrate together rather than just encouraging adults. It is not a place that I have ever seen people go to to drink to excess. It is a family venue through and through. I always notice that drinkers are on their best behaviour. It creates an environment that normalises moderate consumption of alcohol in a society that can sometimes encourage binge drinking.

In my view, all venues should strive to create the family-friendly atmosphere that exists in our micro venues or, at the very least, if you do prefer a more grown-up drinking experience, to ensure that the focus is on the quality of the product you are drinking rather than the quantity. I think this legislation is a wonderful step forward for our craft brewers and craft distillers and I commend it to the House.