



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

Ms PUGH (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (3.13 pm): It is timely that we are debating this bill this week of all weeks, the week of the Mount Ommaney Small Business Awards. Yes, that is right. I am famous for my ability to make anything and any piece of legislation about my small business awards and I will do it again—strap in! As I said, my awards were this week. Hospitality, which is a key issue in this debate, was one of the biggest categories. Can I say how well the small businesses and hospitality businesses in my electorate came through the COVID pandemic. A number of the businesses that were nominated mentioned to me how grateful they were for the takeaway alcohol provisions during the COVID pandemic, because it gave them the opportunity, as I have said in this House, to add that additional revenue stream to their profit margin at a time when they were obviously going through not just a massive recession in the amount of income that they had coming through their door but of course were also scrambling to come up with ways to keep their doors open and remain viable at a time when their core business of opening their doors and serving customers was simply not possible.

With the indulgence of the House, I will say a big congratulations to Bare Bones Society. Nominees every year since the start of the awards, this year it finally took out the big one in its category. It is a very good provider of fine wine with its takeaway food. Yim Thai, Just Poppy's—who took out the overall big award—

An honourable member: Hurry up and take my money!

Ms PUGH: Yes, Yim Thai is very good. I continue: Icarus Greek, Sol Natural Foods, All Things Tasmanian—it does coffee, so no takeaway alcohol there—Curry n Cask—the giveaway is in the name—White Lies Brewery, which is my very own micro-brewery in the heart of Spine Street, the Pepper Lounge, Pepe's Mexican, Eliza's Place and Pump Nutrition. As I have said, many of these venues benefitted from our COVID response allowing takeaway alcohol to supplement their income. It is not a normal thing to do. Normally if one is getting takeaway one would usually stop in at the bottle shop on the way home. The idea of picking something up from the restaurant, perhaps something matched by the expert skills of the staff there—the sommelier on staff if they have one—is a new way of thinking. Of course we as patrons have had to pivot during the COVID pandemic and, likewise, the venues have had to pivot as well.

To give them the opportunity to continue to selling alcohol during COVID has been absolutely critical to the bottom line of the businesses in my community and, I know, businesses right around Queensland, especially those that depend so heavily on tourism trade for income.

As the explanatory notes of the bill outline, after consultation with different groups there has been a reduction in the volume allowed for takeaway. Essentially, that reduction has been from three bottles of wine to two. It is really important in this House that we always take a really critical and measured approach to the retailing of alcohol, because we know that alcohol abuse and misuse continues to be a real issue in our communities. I will share some statistics with the House from the member for Callide

and me when we spoke on a bill a few years ago in Townsville. When it comes to alcohol abuse, particularly in terms of drink-driving, despite 20 years of education programs it is still a significant factor in many road crashes. I quote the member for Callide in *Hansard*—

On average, drink-drivers are still involved in one in five fatalities on Queensland roads.

When we consider the sustained education programs that government after government have undertaken year after year, that is very concerning. As I said, 25 per cent of those drivers often only have a mid-range blood alcohol reading. We have taken steps in this House to ensure that people drink-driving in the mid-range are caught, but it is really important to highlight that we always must be mindful when making access to alcohol easier what unintended consequences that can have.

It is always worth framing these issues in the context of the bigger picture and our national conversation around alcohol. Certainly we have had a number of contributions in that space today. We do need to examine why, despite significant educational programs, we as a country and a state still have such a high level of drink-driving. Why do our emergency rooms continue to be filled with people injured while drinking and driving, while fighting alcohol poisoning and the associated social impacts? It is something that I think we all in this House continue to be concerned about and continue to really think about. That is why after consultation we did impose—and we certainly had groups for and against—provisions where we came down on that in terms of people having a full meal.

The takeaway food that is sold with takeaway alcohol must be a full and proper meal. Unfortunately, the member for Southern Downs' cannoli probably would not have cut the mustard as a full and proper meal. He would have had to order a main course and maybe an entree to ensure the responsible service of alcohol provisions are met. We need to make sure that when people are taking away their two bottles of wine they are also filling their stomachs with good food. The limits on wine have come down from 2.25 litres, which is three bottles of wine, to 1.5 litres. This ensures consistency with existing provisions, which allow the sale of one opened and one unopened bottle of takeaway wine to adults dining on a premise. I think that is important.

It is important to note—and this is something that members of the House will know I am passionate about—that alcohol abuse is not a moral issue; it is an addiction. A significant cohort of our community is impacted by this addiction. Every person who is directly impacted by this issue has family. They might have parents. They might have children. They are equally impacted. Sometimes the impacts on the family blessedly can be relatively mild, but for others they can bear a lifetime of scars from having a family member who suffers from alcohol addiction. I am pleased to see there is support from both sides of the House for ensuring the amount of alcohol is carefully monitored.

Most retailers and certainly most hospitality venues do an exemplary job in making sure that intoxicated people are not served. I also observe that the kind of alcohol that a lot of our small businesses will be retailing is not at the lower end of the unit price scale. We are not talking about cheap bottles of Passion Pop or Fat Little Lamb; we are talking about higher end quality food and beverage products that are matched. I think that is important because we know that a key driver of purchasing large quantities of alcohol for people who struggle with substance addiction is the minimum unit price. Ensuring we keep the price higher and the quality of the product higher is a key deterrent for people considering purchasing alcohol because they are addicted. The bill lands well in that space.

As a fellow hospitality professional, I commend our hospitality industry for the way they turned on a dime during COVID. When I look back over my career in hospitality, our business simply could not have survived without weddings, proposals and special occasion dine-out events. We did so many weddings and proposals at Restaurant Two. It was always planned out. We would have the phone conversation with the very nervous groom. We would get the signal and we would come up with the glass of champagne.

During COVID there was none of that for any restaurant. The fact that they were able to keep their doors open and make their business work is an absolute testament to the hard work, creativity and ingenuity of our hospitality businesses here in Queensland. When I look at the nominees for my small business awards and the fact that they were able to stay open and keep things moving during COVID I am blown away. I am ceaselessly impressed by the dedication and resilience of the retailers, business owners and hardworking staff who pivoted to keep their doors open during what has been a tough time. I certainly commend the bill to the House.