




Speech By
Jonty Bush

MEMBER FOR COOPER

Record of Proceedings, 9 March 2021

LIQUOR (ARTISAN LIQUOR) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms BUSH** (Cooper—ALP) (12.47 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Liquor (Artisan Liquor) Amendment Bill 2020. As a member of the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee I would like to acknowledge and thank the secretariat and all those who made such compelling and detailed submissions.

Here in Queensland we are fortunate to now have an exciting craft beer and artisanal liquor industry. Just ask the member for Rockhampton, who I know is extremely proud of the fact that a spirit produced on his patch was named the world's best spiced rum last year. It is perhaps a good thing that the member for Bundaberg does not join us today. It is called the Capricorn Spice Rum and it is in the members' bar if anyone would like to try it. I am sure Barry would be more than happy to take you for a tasting. In my own electorate of Cooper we are very fortunate to have the Newstead Brewing Company—which has become a huge success story and recently secured its first export order to Hong Kong—as well as a number of other fantastic distillers and brewers.

The objective of this bill is to support the growth and development of this growing industry while maintaining appropriate regulatory oversight. These amendments are the result of recommendations arising from the entrepreneurial pipeline project report and government action under the Queensland Craft Brewing Strategy as well as consultation with industry stakeholders. As stated in the explanatory notes—

The Bill proposes to amend the Liquor Act 1992 (Liquor Act) by:

- creating a new liquor licence category for legitimate craft brewers and artisan distillers, ('commercial other—artisan producer licence')
- expanding the existing promotional event permit framework
- providing additional authorisations for eligible producer/wholesaler licensees
- encouraging the transition of existing licensees to the new artisan producer licence category.

The need for these changes has been made especially clear by COVID-19. In April last year, the national Independent Brewers Association reported a 67 per cent drop in craft beer sales due to closures related to the pandemic. In response, the Queensland government authorised a range of measures for liquor licensees, including the authorisation to sell takeaways on premises and to allow online orders throughout the pandemic. This bill builds on those changes.

The reality is that, while our artisanal liquor and craft brewing industry is thriving, these small operators generally have a limited number of channels to distribute their products through. At a retail level, the market is still dominated by the major supermarket owned players—such as Dan Murphy's, Liquorland and BWS—and many smaller brewers and distillers simply cannot produce the volumes these chains require. That is a huge segment of the market that is effectively closed to artisan producers, which is why it is important to make these regulatory changes required to open up new sales channels and make it easier for them to utilise the channels already open to them.

One of the key measures included in this bill is a new artisan producer licence that allows these businesses to sell craft beer or artisan spirits produced on their licensed premises for on-premises consumption or takeaway in unlimited amounts. They will also be able to sell drinks produced by another artisanal producer licence holder, as well as wine produced in Queensland under a Queensland wine licence. The licence also allows producers to sell their products directly to the public online and via wholesale routes. Businesses can also apply for an enduring approval to sell samples and limited amounts of takeaways of their craft beer or artisan spirits at promotional events and can apply for a commercial public event permit to sell their craft beer or artisan spirits at a public event.

Of course, while it is extremely important that we support local small businesses—and that is indeed the core focus of this government—it is also vital that we retain appropriate regulatory oversight and maintain strong harm minimisation practices. The latter is extremely important to me as someone who has been a strong advocate against alcohol fuelled violence throughout my career. This is an area that we have made significant progress in both as a country and as a state. Alcohol consumption has been trending lower over the past decade, and alcohol fuelled violence has followed a similar trend, although there is always more work for us to do as a society.

With this bill, artisan producer licensees are subject to the same harm minimisation obligations under the Liquor Act as other licence holders. As is the case with pubs and clubs, applicants will need to submit a community impact statement and develop a risk assessed management plan. The responsible service of alcohol obligations remain the same as well. It is vital we maintain these standards and that they apply to everyone equally.

Queenslanders deserve to be safe on a night out. That has not changed and it will not change, but this bill does make it easier for artisanal producers to compete with the larger players. That reflects the strong focus this government has on supporting small businesses, as well as our understanding that we need to be supporting emerging industries that create local jobs and support local economies. Jobs really are a key part of this. One of the interesting things about the growth of these artisanal producers is the trend of small, locally owned businesses taking market share away from large multinationals and creating jobs right up and down the Queensland coast. Every small town seems to have a microbrewery or distillery these days, and it is estimated the sector employs around 1,800 people across the state. By 2024 it is estimated this industry will be worth around \$100 million a year to the Queensland economy.

As I have the XXXX brewery in my electorate, I really should say that this is not a criticism of our larger brewers and distillers, and certainly not of the jobs they provide in our community. Clearly, there will always be a market for big players but, as in everything, diversity is important. These days Queenslanders are more spoilt for choice than they have been when it comes to quality options for a drink. This bill simply provides a boost for those smaller players and local businesses.

The Liquor (Artisan Liquor) Amendment Bill 2020 strikes the right balance between supporting the growth of this sector while maintaining proper regulatory oversight and harm minimisation practices. It was developed with the support of key industry stakeholders, including the Queensland Hotels Association, the Australian Distillers Association, Clubs Queensland, the Independent Brewers Association and of course the relevant government departments. There has also been direct consultation with multiple brewers and distillers in the community. I commend the bill to the House.