




Speech By
Lachlan Millar

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

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LIQUOR (ARTISAN LIQUOR) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (12.54 pm): I rise to speak in support of this bill which will be warmly welcomed by Queensland's independent brewers and Queenslanders generally. As other speakers have pointed out, the bill comes in response to the growth of craft breweries and artisanal distilleries across Australia. This has been a welcome innovation in the brewing industry and reflects a shift towards local cuisines and paddock-to-plate experiences. Wine producers have long had this market to themselves, so beer lovers everywhere have been delighted to see the growth in artisan beers which puts us on a more even footing with our wine lovers.

I cannot speak to this bill without mentioning the most famous craft beer in my electorate—Betoota Bitter. Marketed as Western Queensland's favourite beer, the Yulli's Brews website describes it this way—

Artesian bore water. Warrego Barley. Diamantina Hops. Wild Yeast ... A recipe pioneered over a century of true trial and error ... Be the king of your own grass castle.

Queenslanders love taking the micky. While having some fun with the concept of wine snobbery turning into beer snobbery, the review on Yulli's Brews illustrates the value craft brewers have brought to the brewing scene and the way that value proposition enhances other small businesses in the host location.

These artisan breweries are small to medium enterprises, firmly tied to localities. These attributes make them an engine for local growth. While not exactly in its infancy, it is an industry which is still growing. It is nowhere near its peak of development. Even so, before the pandemic gathering restrictions in Queensland had such a huge impact on our tourism and hospitality sectors, craft brewers and distillers employed over 1,800 people. Pre COVID-19, it was anticipated that the craft beer industry would contribute over \$100 million to the Queensland economy. Beyond that industry specific measurement is the value enhancement that successful craft brewing brings to local employers, especially tourism and local events. The success of craft brewers—both in product and venue terms—magnifies and supports the success of other locally based small businesses and events, such as local produce outlets, farmers' markets and festivals.

Among the biggest challenges faced by the brewers is that our legislation has treated them exactly the same as multinational and national brewers, such as Castlemaine Perkins, which is owned by Lion Nathan, or Carlton & United Breweries, CUB—the old green can. The sustainability and growth of craft breweries and distilleries is much more fragile and needs active fostering. The proposed amendments contained in the bill are in response to the Queensland Craft Brewing Strategy.

This is actually the second bill attempting to underwrite that strategy. The first bill lapsed prior to the last election. Part of the reason is the lack of sitting days and short hours when parliament does sit. The impact of this on the business of parliament has become increasingly clear to many stakeholders. With an October election date set in law, the Independent Brewers Association became increasingly nervous. On 25 August 2020, their spokesman publicly warned that the bill would lapse if it was not promptly introduced to parliament. It did lapse, underscoring the inability of the Labor government to

address the needs of commercial realities promptly. The LNP is relieved to see that the necessary amendment bill has finally made it to the stage of debate and the LNP will be supporting these amendments. However, the minister should not be surprised that the Independent Brewers Association has described this bill as 'too little, too late'.

It is sad to contemplate that, if these changes had been introduced much earlier in the last parliament, craft breweries and distilleries would have been much better placed to deal with the coronavirus gathering restrictions and the severe impacts they had on the industry. These COVID-19 impacts fell very heavily on the infant industry that was still competing on the same terms as large, global multinationals without anywhere near the same resources. If the Labor government had responded in a timely fashion to the clearly stated industry case for legislative reforms, these COVID impacts would not have been so extreme.

The key change in this bill is that it amends the Liquor Act 1992 by creating a new licensing category for legitimate craft brewers and distillers. The bill will also expand the existing promotional event framework. This is absolutely necessary if the industry is to fully grow. It addresses the issue of the distillers being able to promote their product at farmers' markets and local festivals. In doing so, this will help those events as well. I can just about recall when towns had their own soft drink bottling plants, so it is not hard for me to imagine the day when some of our iconic hotels in the electorate of Gregory may want to start moving into craft brewing, and I hope they do.

Finally, before I wrap up, I would like to congratulate Peter Brown from Rubyvale—a fantastic tourism advocate for the gem fields. His sons are opening up their own craft brewery at Rubyvale straightaway. If you are heading on a holiday, come and grab a beer from the gem fields as well as a Betoota Bitter. We would really appreciate it.