




Speech By
James Martin

MEMBER FOR STRETTON

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FOOD (LABELLING OF SEAFOOD) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr MARTIN** (Stretton—ALP) (5.37 pm): I rise to speak to the Food (Labelling of Seafood) Amendment Bill. This bill seeks to mandate country-of-origin labelling on restaurant menus. We already have country-of-origin labelling in the retail sector, which falls under federal regulations; however, this bill seeks to expand those rules to cover local restaurants in Queensland.

The stated objectives of this bill are (1) to increase consumer awareness; and (2) support the Australia seafood industry. I do not believe this bill will achieve either of the stated goals. Further, I believe that these rules and fines would impact local restaurants owners and are frankly unworkable. As soon as I saw this bill I knew that it would not work in my local community. It has not really considered how restaurants in Sunnybank and Sunnybank Hills work. The practical effect of these rules in my local area would be that restaurant owners would simply work around them by stating that everything on the menu was international so they would not have to change their menus every day. This would not increase consumer awareness: it would do quite the opposite. It would also not do anything to support the Australian seafood industry.

The key problem that I can see with this bill is that it is written with a particular kind of restaurant in mind—a fine-dining establishment where the chef writes a new menu every day based on local produce; a menu that would only be on one A4 piece of paper with entree, main and dessert. I certainly think those restaurants are fantastic. We are lucky to have many fantastic fine-dining and high-end establishments in Brisbane.

Ms Grace: The best are in McConnel.

Mr MARTIN: However, if members come to my electorate in Stretton, they will see restaurants that are a bit different to this and, in my opinion, member for McConnel, that are much better. I am very lucky to represent one of the most multicultural areas in Queensland. One of the great benefits of this is the fantastic food available at the many Chinese, Indian, Thai, Vietnamese, Indonesian and Malaysian restaurants and more. There are hundreds of restaurants in my local area, and let me tell the House that competition is fierce—competition on price, but mostly competition on taste and service. If people want to operate a successful restaurant in Stretton, they will not last long serving substandard food.

The restaurant and dining culture in Stretton—and, I would add, in the neighbouring electorate of Toohay—is strong. People talk about new restaurants opening, who owns them and, most importantly, which chef is working in them. It was big news in my local area when master chef DC Huang moved from HANA seafood at Rochedale to 9 Seafood Restaurant at Sunnybank Hills. Members here might remember DC Huang at the Parliamentary Friends of Taiwan barbecue we had on level 7 where he whipped up some delicious Australian abalone. He is a true master chef of international acclaim and I am very proud that he is based in my local area and now based within walking distance of my office.

A key point of difference—and the key reason this bill will not work—is the menus. The menus in my local area are epics; they are more like magazines or books and they are quite expensive to produce. It is a considerable cost to the small business owner to produce these menus, and they are pretty spectacular. Restaurants pride themselves on having massive menus with chefs who are capable of

whipping up hundreds of different dishes in a flash. Most of these dishes contain delicious Australian seafood as well as some imported items, and many contain multiple different types of seafood. Seafood laksa, seafood fried rice or Singapore noodles, just to name a few, have many different types of seafood in them, and these change based on supply and what is available. Ultimately, it would be impossible, expensive and unworkable for restaurant owners in my local area to alter their massive menus every day based on supply.

For the benefit of the House, I have brought some of these menus along and I would like to table them. These are a sample from restaurants that are within walking distance of my office, and I am happy to say that I have dined at all of them many times. The first one is Phat Pantry. It is a fantastic Thai restaurant. I recommend the whole baby barramundi with chu chee curry sauce. My tip though is to ask for mild. I also recommend the tom yum pot which feeds three and has fish, prawns and mussels.

Tabled paper: Menu from The Phat Pantry situated in the electorate of Stretton [1643](#).

If members can see, these menus are huge. They have multiple pages and pictures and they would be very difficult to change every day. The next menu I would like to table is from Kung Food Noodle. This restaurant is famous because they make their own noodles by hand. Members can see that the menu is a large laminated A3 piece of paper with pictures. It is also in Chinese and English. It would be very difficult to modify this menu every day. The tip for Kung Food Noodle is the seafood laksa, but again ask for mild.

Tabled paper: Menu from Kung Food Noodle situated in the electorate of Stretton [1644](#).

One of my favourite restaurants is Ho Lin Wah. This is a Hong Kong style restaurant. It is an institution; it has been around for many years. It serves Cantonese style food. I think they might have one of the biggest menus in town; it is bigger than a magazine. Could members imagine trying to change the labelling on this menu every day. It would be impossible and it would not be fair to them. My tip for Ho Lin Wah—and they are well-known in my local area—is the Singapore noodles, which are already pretty mild.

Tabled paper: Menu from Ho Lin Wah Restaurant situated in the electorate of Stretton [1642](#).

The next menu I would like to table is from 9 Seafood Restaurant. This one is a real treat. It is one of my favourite places. This restaurant has live seafood. You can go in there and pick your Australian seafood right from the tank. You can pick the lobster that you want to eat. It is delicious. This is the one that DC Huang works at. I was very pleased to attend 9 Seafood Restaurant last week with the Hakka Association celebrating the Chong Yang Festival, which is the Double Ninth Festival which celebrates seniors. It coincided with Seniors Month in Queensland as well. I would like to table that menu as well.

Tabled paper: Menu from 9 Seafood Restaurant situated in the electorate of Stretton [1641](#).

I would like to say to members of the Katter party and the LNP that restaurants in my local area already support and promote Australian seafood. They love it and my consumers love it too. However, as members can see, the costs involved in modifying these menus every day would be exorbitant. They do not need to be fined, which is what this bill seeks to do. I am surprised that the LNP would be supporting this. Fining local small businesses is essentially what the LNP will be voting on today. They will be voting to send government inspectors around to local restaurants in my community, on the Gold Coast, in the regions or wherever they might be to fine them. This would be an extra regulation. The LNP are always going on about red tape, yet they are bringing in some extra red tape to fine some small business people.

The legislation is unworkable. Busy chefs will not reprint these menus. They will order the food and then go back into the kitchens. They are not going to reprint these menus. They will just mark that everything on the menu could be international. They are not going to change things every day. The idea behind the bill will not work, and it will have the opposite effect to what this legislation is seeking to do.

I am proud of these local restaurants in my area and I will always stand up for them. I do not support the bill and I ask the LNP to consider this before they vote. I know there are restaurants in their local communities and I do not believe LNP members have consulted with those restaurant owners. Do they really support fining these small business owners? Do they really support sending inspectors in to check the menus? Do they really want more red tape? I support the seafood industry, but this bill will not support the seafood industry and it will not support local small businesses. It will do the opposite. I will not be supporting this bill.