




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR WARREGO

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ADJOURNMENT

Romavilla Winery

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (7.12 pm): On 22 June 2023, Queensland lost its oldest winery, Romavilla, to fire. Romavilla vineyards was established by Samuel Bassett in 1863. The first wines were sold in 1866 and the last vintage was in 2011. Romavilla did not miss a vintage in 145 years. Interestingly, Billy Hughes worked in the vineyards in 1890. He revisited in 1950.

Samuel Bassett sent his son, William, to work for Leo Burning in South Australia for two years in 1898 to learn winemaking. On his return, William took over the winemaking. In 1967, William sold part of the vineyard land to the Roma Town Council for the establishment of the Bassett Park complex. William Bassett died in 1972, and in 1975 the winery was sold to the Wall and Sproule families. David and Joy Wall became the owners of Romavilla in 1980. The winery won many prizes in Australia, England and Europe. The Wall and Sproule families worked at Romavilla, as did many other great young people during their school and university holidays, picking, pruning and crushing grapes and in the cellar. When the Wall family took over, they installed new equipment and new grape varieties were planted allowing state-of-the-art wines to be made. Richard Wall took over the vineyard management and winemaking in the early 2000s and the winery continued to prosper.

In 2010 the first of three major floods occurred in Roma and many items of equipment were replaced or repaired after the 2010 and 2011 floods. Against the wishes of the Wall family, Romavilla Winery was heritage listed in 2008, and I recall fighting with the Walls against the heritage listing and they gave me a tour inside at the time. Richard Wall started a new career in 2011, and David and Joy decided to retire because of ill health. This heritage listing made it very difficult to sell the winery. It sold in early 2013, but remained vacant. The vineyard has become heavily timbered with black wattle. Had the winery not been heritage listed, the building could have been used for another purpose. A very limiting factor with grape growing in the region, indeed all horticulture in Roma, is the lack of availability of good water.

I would like to thank David and Joy Wall for their help in compiling this very brief history of Romavilla. The Roma community and the descendants of the Bassett family all share in their sadness at the loss of Queensland's oldest winery, Romavilla.