

## Question on Notice

No. 840

Asked on Wednesday, 20 November 2013

**MR HOPPER** asked the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice (MR BLEIJIE) –

QUESTION:

Will the Minister explain the rationale behind the flat fee for hotel licensing of \$3,162.00, an amount which impacts severely on small rural pubs, and will he consider changing the legislation to make it fairer for small pubs and enable them to survive in this economic climate?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Condamine for his question.

An annual licence fee structure was introduced on 1 January 2009, following a comprehensive review of the *Liquor Act 1992* (the Liquor Act). The base fee component for a commercial hotel reflects the potential risk such an establishment poses to community safety and amenity, as well as the cost to the Government of monitoring the operations of this type of licence.

Further risk based fees are applicable if a licensee has an adverse compliance history or wishes to trade beyond midnight.

This Government acknowledges the impact of the annual licence fees on small rural hotels in the current economic climate and has recently announced a range of liquor licensing reforms aimed at reducing the burden on small business.

In this regard, an amendment to the Liquor Act has recently been passed to expand the opportunities for licensees to make payment of annual licence fees by instalments. In addition to the grounds of personal hardship and natural disaster, licensees may now also make an application to pay the licence fee in instalments if they are suffering from a financial hardship.

I have asked the Commissioner for Liquor and Gaming to establish a guideline to clarify the concept of financial hardship to include a major economic downturn in a region. I have further requested the guideline be as flexible as possible to ensure eligible licensees, particularly those in rural and regional communities, have access to instalment plans for the payment of their licence fees.

Concessions have also been made in relation to the risk based fee component of the annual licence fee, with the removal of the 'prepared food available' criteria. This will further benefit rural hotels and clubs as they will no longer incur an additional annual licence fee if they operate beyond 7pm and do not have food available up until two hours prior to closing.

Other red tape reduction initiatives include removing the requirement for licensees to keep an approved manager register, removing the requirement for persons trained in responsible management of licensed venues to also complete Responsible Service of Alcohol (RSA) training and removing the requirement for licensees to keep RSA training registers.

A range of gaming related amendments have also been introduced by this Government to further ease the burden on Queensland licensees.