



Speech By
Jann Stuckey

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

Record of Proceedings, 26 February 2019

LIQUOR (RURAL HOTELS CONCESSION) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mrs STUCKEY** (Currumbin—LNP) (6.17 pm): The Liquor (Rural Hotels Concession) Amendment Bill 2018 is substantially the same as the Liquor (Rural Hotels Concession) Amendment Bill 2017. I commend the honourable member for Traeger for introducing this bill and its subject matter. Together with some of my LNP colleagues who represent their outback and rural electorates so passionately, the honourable member understands the exceptional circumstances and hardships endured by the good folk who live in remote and semi-remote towns and regions. As a member of that committee I saw firsthand the trials and tribulations that people who choose the bush as their home and place of business experience on a daily basis.

A number of witnesses travelled hundreds of kilometres to attend our hearings and be given the opportunity to tell us about their difficulties. I thank them sincerely for that. They told us how they juggled their budgets to keep trading through extra lean times, how hard it is to repair and maintain buildings and machinery, and the unfairness of having to pay the same fees for hotel licences as their city counterparts who have access to much larger populations and therefore patronage.

The policy objective of the bill is to change the existing liquor licensing framework to reflect the unique circumstances of licensed venues in very remote communities. In order to achieve this, a concession fee for commercial hotels in very remote communities would be created. This concession fee will be assessed at 10 per cent of the licence fee, which currently costs a minimum of \$3,757 a year, which results in a reduced fee of \$375.70. The contents of this bill had already been well examined, with widespread consultation, as the current chair noted on more than one occasion and when he thanked the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee for its efforts in report No. 19 of the 56th Parliament.

Extensive examination of the 2017 bill included holding a public briefing, the receipt of 19 submissions, roundtable discussions in Normanton, Thursday Island, Cunnamulla, Charleville, Blackall, Longreach and Hughenden and a public hearing in Brisbane. This bill recognises the distinctive character and unique challenges faced by hotels in remote regions. On our committee travels we meet some exceptional people with a love and devotion for the bush and an amazing stamina and a patience that is often regaled only in books and movies. Due to the remoteness, these watering holes are far more than a place to quench a thirst. They play unlimited roles in their communities and the extent of those roles is remarkable. From post office to pet minding, from meeting place for community groups or just to have a chat, for domestic violence victims, wakes after funerals, vehicle storage and parcel drop-off, the list is endless. Many serve as the local tourism information bureau, with travellers stopping for information and directions and others as the hub for sports groups, sponsorships and more. Ms Janelle Jackson from the Eulo Queen Hotel said—

... I should have a tourist information job because nine times out of 10 people just walk in and say, 'Where's this? Where's that? How do we get there? Who's this? Who's that? Where's that at?' You do not sell them a drink; you spend half your time giving them directions.

Some establishments rely on motel or hotel style accommodation to stay afloat. Others have hot meals on offer. What is patently clear is the fact that they all provide much more than a cold drink and supply many meaningful services that they do not get paid for. Councillor Kate Downie from the Flinders Shire Council and the Great Western Hotel and Royal Hotel in Hughenden said—

We are the fabric of these communities. We are the meeting place. We are the major private employers. We are the community sponsors. We are the people the town turns to for support. It has very little to do with alcohol. Without us, these towns simply do not exist. This bill has much more than monetary value. It is an acknowledgement that, once again, one rule does not fit all and it is a display of understanding from our government that rural and remote Queensland is being heard and understood.

Since the tabling of the report on this bill, Queenslanders in north and north-west regions have experienced unimaginable hardships through severe opposing weather events of fires, droughts and floods. Our hearts go out to all affected and many messages of support and gratitude were expressed in this House earlier today. It is not only pubs and community clubs in very remote areas that will suffer further. Some 58 per cent of Queensland is drought declared. It is for these reasons that the LNP will move amendments to the bill to extend the application of it and give some relief to these hubs that act as the social fabric of their respective communities. The KAP proposal—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Whiting): Order! Member for Currumbin, I have pointed out to a couple of people the need to stick to the debate on the general principles of the bill. Please do not anticipate any future amendments.

Mrs STUCKEY: I certainly am not, Mr Deputy Speaker. The KAP proposal was estimated to capture—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hang on. Thank you. You may recommence. I have given you some direction and some assistance and I appreciate you taking that on board.

Mrs STUCKEY: The KAP proposal was estimated to capture 110 hotels and pubs whereas the LNP's amendments, which will be introduced and I hope to get the support of the House later—

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Currumbin. You may take a seat.