

17 September 2021

The Hon. Shannon Fentiman MP
Attorney General and Minister for Justice

Via email: shannon.fentiman@ministerial.qld.gov.au

Dear Minister Fentiman,

RE: Justice Legislation (COVID-19 Emergency Response – Permanency) Amendment Bill 2021

R&CA wishes to express its disappointment and bewilderment at yesterday's release of the Justice Legislation (COVID-19 Emergency Response – Permanency) Amendment Bill 2021, particularly changes to the quantity of alcohol allowed to be sold with a meal for takeaway at restaurants and cafés.

R&CA is the national industry association representing the interests of more than 48,000 restaurants, cafés and catering businesses across Australia. The café, restaurant and catering sector is vitally important to the national economy, generating over \$37 billion in retail turnover each year as well as employing 450,000 people. Over 92 per cent of businesses in the café, restaurant and catering sector are small businesses, employing 19 people or less. In QLD, the sector represents 8,354 businesses employing 112,000 people each year.

The removal of beer and RTDs from the legislation, as well as a cap at only a 1.5 litre bottle of wine, will have a devastating effect on an already hurting industry. As per our previous submission on this matter, R&CA strongly supported following the example of other states such as South Australia and Victoria in introducing permanent laws that allowed takeaway liquor to be sold ancillary to the purchase of a meal and allowing for up to 2.25 litres of liquor to be sold.

This announcement, without consultation, makes little sense as to why the sale of beer and RTDs would be removed from the current laws. The loss of RTDs and beer from takeaway sales will have demonstrably adverse effect also have an impact on household name brands in Queensland such as Bundaberg Rum and XXXX Beer who would have seen an increase in sales during this period.

R&CA's 2020 Benchmark report indicates that the COVID-19 pandemic has drastically and permanently changed the face of the hospitality industry, with takeaway and delivery increasing from 9 percent of all order pre-pandemic to nearly 30 percent.

Takeaway liquor has become an important source of revenue of operators. This is important to keep in mind when, according to IBISWorld, restaurants, cafes and caterers have lost \$10 billion in bookings and events since the start of COVID-19. This would be only amplified in regions such as Far North Queensland who are particularly hurt by staff shortages and by the loss of tourism.

Since the impact of nationwide lockdowns and the onset of COVID-19 in Australia, from March 2020 to February 2021, the turnover for liquor sales was \$16.06 billion, an increase of almost 30 percent from \$12.43 billion the previous year. In addition, every corresponding month between these two time periods saw an increase compared to the same month in the previous year.

R&CA is seeking an explanation for this decision and request the addition of RTDs and beer to the sale of takeaway liquor in restaurants, cafes and catering businesses.

We look forward to hearing from you on this matter and request a meeting as soon as convenient.

Sincerely,



Wes Lambert CPA FGIA MAICD
Chief Executive Officer
Restaurant and Catering Australia

CC:

The Hon. Dianne Farmer MP
Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development

The Hon. Stirling Hinchliffe MP
Minister for Tourism Industry Development and Innovation and Minister for Sport

Legal Affairs and Safety Committee

Restaurant
& Catering