

30th April 2024

The Rob Mitchell MP
Member for McEwen
Chair of House Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Resources
Parliament House



Dear Mr Mitchell,

RE: Food and Beverage Manufacturing in Australia

I write to make a submission to the House Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Resources' current inquiry into food and beverage manufacturing in Australia.

Restaurant & Catering Australia (R&CA) is the peak industry body representing over 57,000 restaurants, cafes and catering businesses across Australia. The members of R&CA are owners and operators of restaurants, cafes, coffee shops, catering companies, takeaway businesses, and function centres. The hospitality sector is vitally important to the national economy, generating over \$40.4 billion in retail turnover each year as well as employing 350,000 people.

R&CA would like to refer to two particular industries within food and beverage manufacturing that we believe the committee should take a particular interest in. Firstly, the role of domestically produced alcoholic beverages (including spirits, wine and beer) is a vital piece of the wider tourism, hospitality and food and beverage ecosystem in Australia that makes a significant contribution to the vibrancy of the dining experience at restaurants, cafes and bars across Australia. Secondly, the growth of native Australian ingredients is another area that deserves the committee's attention.

Australian Made Spirits, Wine & Beer

Australian diners, and international diners visiting Australia, are increasingly searching for authentic food and beverage experiences at restaurants, cafes and bars. A clear example of this is the recent rise in Australian made spirits and distilleries. In the last decade, the proliferation of Australian made spirits and distilleries has exploded, with there now being more than 700 across Australia, according to media reports. This has come at the same time as a broader consumer push for spirits and cocktails over other alcoholic products in hospitality businesses. Hospitality businesses, like R&CA's members, have only benefited from this shift in consumer trend. More premium, domestically produced products allow for a more vibrant, exciting dining scene here in Australia that is more attractive to domestic and international tourists when visiting Australia. For example, an archie rose gin or a Starward whiskey is just as likely to be a feature of a cocktail list at a restaurant than an international gin or whiskey.

Secondly, for R&CA's members who operate in tourist areas, the rise in Australian spirits is equally helpful as it adds to the tourism experience, in the same way wineries and breweries have for decades in Australia. Distilleries, Breweries and Wineries represent more than 7.3 million domestic visitors across Australia per year according to Tourism Research Australia, with Distilleries the fastest growing tourism attraction in Australia.

Finally, as these businesses grow in Australia, the vibrancy they create is having a direct impact on the role of bartending and cocktail making in hospitality businesses. Being able to work with exciting new spirits is a great drawcard venue owners use to draw young Australians into a career in hospitality, which is vital as the sector goes through significant skills and workforce shortages.

These premium Australian made products are responding to current trends in consumer choice in dining and assist the broader tourism and hospitality industry here in Australia, R&CA suggests this sector should be closely considered by the committee in its deliberations.

Native Ingredients

Increasingly hospitality businesses are incorporating native ingredients to their menus with a growing appreciation for the unique and diverse flavour offerings.

Whether its finger limes, lemon myrtle or Davidson plum the culinary potential of bush tucker is an exciting trend that will only continue and complement our world class meat, seafood and vegetables on Australian menus. Encouraging this sector to grow has equally significant flow on benefits to the vibrancy and uniqueness of the Australian hospitality scene.

Thank you for providing R&CA the opportunity to submit to this important inquiry. If you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contacting us at policy@rca.asn.au.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Manickam', with a horizontal line underneath.

Suresh Manickam
CEO
Restaurant & Catering Association