



Liquor Amendment (Racing Clubs) Bill.

Second Reading

Mr GRAHAM WEST (Campbelltown—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.26 a.m.], on behalf of Mr Grant McBride: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill has its origins in proceedings decided late last year by the Licensing Court of New South Wales. A decision by the Licensing Court has identified an anomaly within the current liquor laws whereby racing clubs may apply for, and be granted, a Governor's licence but it is an offence for them to serve alcohol under this category of licence. This anomaly exists because an offence is committed where liquor is sold by an unregistered club. The Liquor Act defines an unregistered club as one that is not registered under the Registered Clubs Act. Currently, an exemption from the offence of selling liquor in an unregistered club applies only where it holds a function or university licence under the Liquor Act. While many racing clubs sell liquor under a function licence and are, therefore, protected by this exemption, a growing number of racing clubs have relinquished their function licence in favour of a Governor's licence.

Many honourable members would be aware that this Government introduced liquor reforms for the racing industry in 2001 by making horse racing clubs and harness racing clubs eligible to obtain a Governor's licence. These reforms were brought about in recognition of the valuable community assets that are operated by racing clubs, particularly in regional centres. Many racing clubs have taken up the option of a Governor's licence because it is more flexible and allows the clubs to make better use of their function and hospitality facilities outside of their usual race meetings. Giving racing clubs the ability to utilise their function facilities for corporate events, weddings and other functions outside of their normal race meetings has ensured that these clubs have a more sustainable future, and a sustainable future for these racing clubs, particularly in country areas, is important for the continuing development of their local community.

Racing clubs are part of the social fabric in many regional communities. The racecourse is an important community asset, and it needs to be maintained and preserved. Racing clubs that are able to offer additional community services through hospitality and functions are able to offset the cost of maintaining their racetrack and associated facilities. This ensures a greater viability for country racetracks. In many regional centres, racing clubs have become much more than a racetrack, a bar, and a bookmakers ring. In many cases, hard-working racing club committees and staff have developed first-class function and conference facilities that have become welcome additions to their local communities. That has helped boost tourism, added to the viability of country racing, and meant that revenue from conferences and functions is kept in the local community.

In this way, racetracks are an important part of the regional economy, providing employment to the local community. This is because a Governor's licence provides far greater flexibility in terms of the way liquor can be sold than is the case under a traditional function licence. The Minister has had the pleasure of visiting many racetracks—both regional and metropolitan—around the State. The feedback he has from the racing clubs has been overwhelmingly positive. These reforms have meant that the expanded catering operations of thoroughbred and harness racing clubs have provided additional revenue streams and employment opportunities for these non-profit clubs. This bill removes any uncertainty surrounding the right of racing clubs to obtain a Governor's licence. The other key aspect of the bill is that it gives greyhound racing clubs the same opportunity to apply for a Governor's licence that is already available to thoroughbred racing and harness racing clubs. This is particularly important in ensuring consistency across the racing codes.

Some greyhound racing clubs across New South Wales have developed top-rate function facilities, and they should be granted the ability to apply for a Governor's licence. Through this bill, the opportunity is being taken to align the liquor trading entitlements of greyhound racing clubs with those enjoyed by thoroughbred and harness racing clubs. This will add to the viability of greyhound racing clubs that want to maximise the use of their conference and function facilities. Of course, the clubs may opt to retain their current function licence, but the bill provides them with the option to take up a Governor's licence. The Department of Gaming and Racing will be able to provide assistance to greyhound racing clubs that are interested in obtaining a Governor's licence for their premises. I commend the bill to the House.

[Your feedback](#) [Legal notice](#)

Refer updates to Hansard Office on 02 9230 2233 or use the feedback link above.