



Liquor Amendment (Special Events Hotel Trading) Bill 2007

Liquor Amendment (Special Events Hotel Trading) Bill 2007

Extract from NSW Legislative Council Hansard and Papers Wednesday 26 September 2007.

Second Reading

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Parliamentary Secretary) [5.31 p.m.], on behalf of the Hon. John Hatzistergos: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The 2007 Rugby World Cup is presently being held in France, with selective games also being played in Wales and Scotland. There is a high level of interest in games involving the Wallabies, and many people are also closely watching the fortunes of other teams. The time difference between France and Australia has resulted in match telecasts beginning late at night or in the early morning hours. Many people wish to watch match telecasts in licensed venues, principally hotels and registered clubs. These venues are a traditional Australian social environment for sporting fans. Under the Liquor Act, standard hotel trading is limited to midnight closing on Monday to Saturday and 10.00 p.m. closing on Sundays. Approximately 50 per cent of hotels already have extended trading past midnight on Saturdays approved under the Act. Closing times vary from 1.00 a.m. through to 24-hour operations.

Standard hotel opening times under the Liquor Act are 5.00 a.m. from Monday to Saturday and 10.00 a.m. on Sunday. The Liquor Act allows hotels to apply to the Licensing Court to open from 5.00 a.m. and trade until midnight on Sundays to meet the needs of tourists and tourism, or other special needs. Approximately 30 per cent of New South Wales hotels have taken advantage of this extended trading, while a few hotels in the central Sydney area also have had trading approved beyond midnight on Sunday nights. The hotel industry has asked that standard hotel trading be extended during the Rugby World Cup. The industry pointed out that some matches, particularly those commencing at or after 10.00 p.m. New South Wales time will be part way through when many hotels will be required to close for the evening.

Patrons will be disgruntled if hotels are forced to close part way through matches. Licensees will have problems asking patrons to leave and dispersing them from the immediate surrounds. The forced exit on to the street of large numbers of hotel patrons can also place a significant strain on local transport and security. Unfortunately, it has not been possible for amendments to the liquor laws to be considered in time for pool matches of the Rugby World Cup. Therefore, this bill is limited only to hotel trading hours for finals matches. The bill amends the Liquor Act to provide for special hotel trading on Saturday 6 October 2007 and Sunday 7 October 2007 until 1.00 a.m. on the following day, or until the relevant finals match on each of those days concludes, when a telecast of the match is provided by a hotel.

The bill also provides special hotel trading from 5.00 a.m. on Sunday 7 October 2007, Sunday 14 October 2007 and Sunday 21 October 2007 to cater for finals matches that commence early in the morning. This is a modest but reasonable extension to accommodate finals matches that have already begun during standard trading hours for most hotels, and to allow patrons to view early Sunday morning finals matches. The extension will allow hotels to sell liquor for consumption on licensed premises only. It does not permit takeaway sales to be made. Further, the extension will not overrule any previously imposed trading restrictions or other conditions that apply to an individual hotel licence. Restrictions dealing with neighbourhood disturbance problems that are imposed by the Liquor Administration Board, including lockouts and restricted entry, will continue to apply. Also, the bill will not specifically overrule planning approvals administered by local councils.

As I have already noted, some hotels have extended trading approved under the existing law. This proposal will not restrict the trading rights of those hotels. It is not necessary for the bill to propose extended hotel trading for Rugby World Cup finals matches on 8 October 2007, 15 October 2007 and 20 October 2007 as those matches will be telecast during standard hotel trading hours. This bill applies to hotels only as registered clubs generally have no restrictions on their trading hours under the Registered Clubs Act. The Government does not consider it necessary or desirable for an extension of trading hours to be made available to licensed restaurants or other licensed venues because those venues are generally not used by the public for viewing the telecast of significant sporting events. I advise that the Government will move an amendment to the bill in Committee to remove the regulation-making power from the bill, which would have allowed the responsible Minister to extend hotel trading hours for significant events in the future. There is precedent for this bill. The Liquor Act was amended in 2002 and in 2006 to extend hotel trading for certain games of the FIFA World Cup. I commend the bill to the House.