



BREWERS
ASSOCIATION

Select Committee into jobs for the future in regional areas
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

5 September 2019

Dear Chair,

Select Committee into jobs for the future in regional areas

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on jobs for the future in regional areas. Employment in regional areas is vital to the health and viability of regional communities, rural Australia and the nation as a whole.

The Committee has rightly identified that community infrastructure supports regional investment and job creation. The major brewers of Australia could not agree more.

We see a role for the Government in creating the conditions that enable community infrastructure to thrive in regional Australia. This, in turn, will help regional Australia to thrive.

The Brewers Association of Australia (Brewers) submits that this should begin with an acknowledgement by the Committee that local pubs and clubs are essential community infrastructure in regional areas.

About Brewers

Brewers represents Australia's major beer makers – Carlton & United Breweries, Lion Beer Australia and Coopers Brewery.

The beer sector in Australia underpins \$16.5 billion a year in economic activity – accounting for around one per cent of GDP. Australian beer production provides 12,564 direct full-time jobs and underpins 103,000 full-time jobs throughout the economy.

Australian brewers have deep ties to regional Australia. Every year domestic beer production sources 200,000 tonnes of malting barley and 500 tonnes of hops from Australian farmers. At the other end of the supply chain, Brewers' members supply thousands of regional and rural customers around the country.

Community infrastructure

Research demonstrates that having a 'local' is associated with several positive outcomes, including higher life satisfaction, greater interpersonal trust, and greater connectedness with community¹.

This association is especially strong in regional communities, where isolation and distance pose particular social challenges. It is, therefore, not surprising that pubs and clubs are at the epicentre of local regional communities.

Social isolation and loneliness

Social isolation and loneliness are important issues. More and more, loneliness is recognised as a social problem with wide-ranging consequences for social cohesion and population health.

A recent survey² by *the Economist* found that 22 per cent of adults in the United Kingdom and 23 per cent of adults in the United States 'always or often feel lonely, or lack companionship, or else feel left out or isolated'.

In January 2018, then-UK Prime Minister Theresa May appointed Britain's first Minister for Loneliness, and Australia, the UK and Denmark have all launched campaigns combatting social isolation.

These effects can be particularly pronounced in regional areas, where the local pub is often an integral part of local communities and can serve as a meeting place where communities gather to keep in touch.

Mental health and other issues in regional Australia

Mental health issues are particularly acute in regional Australia. Rates of suicide among those living outside capital cities is higher than that within them, in every State in Australia³. Men are particularly at risk.

We stress that this research focuses on the roles of licensed premises, not of alcohol, in establishing these connections. There are many examples of other venues and social groups that may likely play equivalent roles, such as community groups and sporting clubs.

It is appropriate that the Select Committee evaluate the role of community hubs and interpersonal contact more broadly in promoting positive mental health outcomes, and we hope this research can add to that discussion.

Brewers submits that the decline of many of these alternatives in regional Australia gives cause for serious consideration of the role of licensed venues in the social fabric of their communities and the mental well-being of their patrons.

¹ Jonason, P (2018) *Where everyone knows your name: the social and psychological value of having a "local" in Australia* Lion, Sydney.

² *The Economist* 'Loneliness is a serious public health problem', September 1 2018
<https://www.economist.com/international/2018/09/01/loneliness-is-a-serious-public-health-problem>

³ Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health (2017) *Suicide and suicide prevention in rural areas of Australia, briefing paper, Rural Suicide prevention forum, 11th April 2017*,
https://www.crrmh.com.au/content/uploads/Briefing-Paper_FINAL_11052017.pdf



Conclusion

The local is a place where people go to chat, celebrate, commiserate, and generally keep in touch with the local community.

Like the rest of regional Australia, regional pubs and clubs are doing it tough. We believe that the Committee should acknowledge the role of the country pub in supporting its community. The Government should continue to look for ways to support the venues that support regional communities.

Pubs and clubs play a pivotal role in small towns that is unique from other venues – and steeped in cultural history. These are places that cannot simply be replaced. They are worth our consideration and support.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to comment on this important issue.

Kind regards,



Brett Heffernan

Chief Executive Officer

Brewers Association of Australia

M: 0467 650 020

E: brett.heffernan@brewers.org.au

Attachment: Jonason, P (2018) *Where everyone knows your name: the social and psychological value of having a "local" in Australia* Lion, Sydney.

