# Abandon the proposed amendment to Queensland’s Liquor Act that makes temporary COVID-19 measures permanent

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| **Date** | 2021-10-15 15:09:01 |
| **Categories** | Policy  |

### The COVID-19 Emergency Response – Permanency Amendment Bill fails to consider the overall health and wellbeing of all Queenslanders.

The *Justice Legislation (COVID-19 Emergency Response - Permanency) Amendment Bill 2021 (COVID-19 Permanency Bill)*makes permanent certain aspects of the temporary laws made in response to the COVID-19 public health emergency. These changes include amendments to the Queensland Liquor Act.

This Bill would allow for more venues to be able to sell alcohol into the home – effectively making every food take-away and restaurant a bottleshop. This is particularly concerning given the evidence that increasing the density of alcohol outlets increases harms like family violence.

FARE CEO Caterina Giorgi spoke at a Queensland Government Public Hearing regarding this bill.

Read her full speech below:

I would like to start by acknowledging the traditional owners, the Wiradjuri people, and to pay my respect to elders past and present.

I would also like to thank you for the opportunity to appear today.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us that our health and wellbeing is the most important thing.

For many of us, this pandemic has created a lot of fear, uncertainty, financial strain and social isolation.

And 18 months in, we are now seeing the hidden harms of this shadow pandemic on people’s mental health, on family violence, and on alcohol and other drug use.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, alcohol retailers and companies have used this public health crisis to aggressively market their products as a ‘way to cope’.

Alcohol retailer turnover increased by $3.3 billion from 2019 to 2020, reaching a record $15.6 billion - an increase of 26.7 per cent.

While this has been highly profitable for alcohol companies and retailers, we are now starting to grapple with the impact of increasing rates of alcohol harm on families and communities.

The National Alcohol and Other Drug Hotline has recorded an approximate doubling in calls in early 2020, compared to the same time in 2019.

Just last week, the ABS released data showing an 8.3 per cent increase in alcohol-induced deaths in Australia between 2019 and 2020.

There are also signs of increases in people seeking support for alcohol from alcohol and other drug treatment services and increased involvement of alcohol in family violence incidents.

This is the reality that many people across our country are living with during this pandemic.

The Bill in question today, *The COVID-19 Emergency Response – Permanency Amendment Bill,* fails to consider the overall health and wellbeing of all Queenslanders.

This Bill, which attempts to make temporary measures during the COVID-19 restrictions permanent, allows for more venues to be able to sell alcohol into the home – effectively making every food take-away and restaurant a bottleshop. This is particularly concerning given the evidence that increasing the density of alcohol outlets increases harms like family violence.

Extending access to alcohol would mean that the increased levels of harms that we see in our communities right now will become our new normal. We cannot put children and families at further risks.

Instead of looking at ways to increase the availability of alcohol, we should look at responding to the changing ways in which alcohol companies sell and deliver alcohol products online.

We can start this by amending the Liquor Act to include measures such as ensuring that alcohol delivered to homes is not sold to children or to people who are intoxicated and that companies with particularly harmful practices like rapid alcohol delivery have further checks and balances in place.

As we now look forward to safely coming out of this pandemic, let us make sure that every decision we take puts the health and wellbeing of our children, our families, and more communities first. Abandoning the proposed amendments to the Liquor Act to make the temporary COVID-19 measures permanent is the right step in that direction.

Thank you.

### Metadata