

Transcript

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Compere: **CRAIG ZONCA AND LORETTA RYAN** Summary ID: **X00083346010**
Item: **INTERVIEW WITH AUSTRALASIAN ASSOCIATION OF CONVENIENCE STORES CEO JEFF ROGUT.**

INTERVIEWEES: JEFF ROGUT, CEO, AUSTRALASIAN ASSOCIATION OF CONVENIENCE STORES

Audience:	Male 16+ 23000	Female 16+ 23000	All people 47000
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LORETTA RYAN: Alright, let's get back into this conversation about booze at your local convenience store - should you be able to buy it there? What do you reckon? 1300-222-612. You already buy cigarettes and other age restricted products like Lotto tickets, so should we be able to buy booze?

CRAIG ZONCA: Yeah, it's- a lot of discussion on this on the text line, we'll try to get through a few more of those. It- this renewed push, you might say, is coming from the Australasian Association of Convenience Stores and their submission to a Government inquiry into the response to the health pandemic.

Jeff Rogut is the Chief Executive Officer of the group. Jeff, why now, why this renewed push from your organisation to sell grog in your stores?

JEFF ROGUT: Good morning. And it's not something new, as you say, it is renewed. When the Government recently called for submissions into recovery post the COVID

pandemic, we saw this as an opportunity for small businesses to look at new revenue streams. Obviously, we're going through some horrendous times in retail, generally - our stores, particularly in CBD areas, have suffered to a degree because of the lack of tourists, people working from home, lack of people in the offices.

And it's really brought home again, the opportunity that we're missing out on, and the larger stores who we are unable to compete against, are really cleaning up this market. So, it's not saying that we can extend the alcohol market. All we're saying is, let us compete with other resellers of alcohol and make it easier for consumers who want that choice and want that convenience.

LORETTA RYAN:

But are the positives, you know, really the negatives outweigh them, don't they? Because we've got texts coming through saying people struggle with alcoholism now, they don't need any more temptation.

JEFF ROGUT:

Look, we understand that, we understand the social issues and don't resile from that. It's important to note on the other side, there is the commercial reality that despite us being excluded, it's not precluding the larger stores for continuing to build these huge liquor barns, selling alcohol at discounted prices.

When we survey consumers - as there was recently a survey by one of the companies that does work in the convenience area, Convenience Measures Australia - over 70 per cent of consumers said they would buy

beer or wine from a convenience store. So again, we're not talking about a huge range, we're not talking about discounted product, we're not talking about selling it 24 hours. We would sell it at the times that other retailers are able to sell it as well.

CRAIG ZONCA:

Jeff, would you support supermarkets in Queensland being able to sell alcohol there?

JEFF ROGUT:

Look, we don't have a problem with anybody selling whatever products are legal and available to them. We certainly don't seek to curtail the market; we're saying we want to compete with them and do it on a level playing field.

CRAIG ZONCA:

We spoke to the Queensland Treasurer earlier today, who effectively said, at this stage the Government is not considering it as an idea. What would you say to the Treasurer and other Government ministers who are the policy makers for this state?

JEFF ROGUT:

Look, it is really an interesting one. When we talk to politicians one on one; they support us, they support the position, they see what happens with convenience in many countries where they do it quite responsibly. When we say, why not? The simple answer that comes back is, well, there's really no votes in it for us.

So, we're saying, look at it more broadly, let's be innovative. And I say this not only to the Government, but to the opposition parties as well; let's look at small business, let's look at the opportunities. And if we can do it responsibly, give us the opportunity to do so. If

retailers are found to be flouting the laws, punish them, take away their licences, do whatever's needed. But just as we sell tobacco very successfully, and it is age restricted, we believe we can do the same with alcohol.

We've also seen the growth of things such as home delivery for alcohol, quite easy for people to do that. In certain states such as Victoria, you can go to a drive through bottle shop for all hours of the morning, not even get out of your car, and buy alcohol. So, we're saying we are in a good position to check age, do age verification, have trained staff, and be able to sell it responsibly.

The other point I'd make quickly, is that it is a job opportunity, it would need new skills, new people in our industry. And then, from a supplier point of view, who may be locked out of supply to the larger stores, we offer them, you know, many thousands of stores potentially where they can sell their products as well.

LORETTA RYAN:

Alright. Might be some future look at the alcohol laws that are happening here in Queensland as you're saying-

JEFF ROGUT:

[Talks over] Absolutely, we would certainly value that.

LORETTA RYAN:

Alright. Jeff Rogut the Chief Executive Officer of the Australasian Association of Convenience Stores. Thanks for joining us.

JEFF ROGUT:

Pleasure. Thank you for the time.

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