



GI Bill Good for Wines and Spirits

Chief Executive of the Distilled Spirits Association, Thomas Chin, gave oral testimony to the select committee investigating the *Geographical Indications (Wine and Spirits) Registration Bill* today, urging them to recommend the Government pass the Bill as soon as possible.

The Bill, which is before the Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade Select committee, aims to clarify and strengthen the legal protection of well-known local and international wine and spirit names with geographical indications (GIs)¹.

At the hearing, Mr Chin welcomed this comprehensive review of an important intellectual property law, and appealed for a tough infringements and penalties regime to be included to safeguard famous and well-established wine and spirit names from exploitation.

“New Zealand law must strongly protect GI wine and spirits from misuse or misrepresentation. Imitation is apparently the sincerest form of flattery, but the copying and counterfeiting of wines and spirits is just as detrimental to our industry and economy as it is to the music, software and clothing industries, and it must be stopped,” says Mr Chin.

The proposed new legislation should deter counterfeiters of products that can only legally be produced in a designated district, region or area, such as Cognac and Tequila.

“This new law will create a higher standard of honesty on all wine and spirit product labeling. To survive and grow, legitimate GI producers need to know that their intellectual property is well-protected”.

Mr Chin says the new law could also benefit local producers and emerging New Zealand spirit GIs such as "Hokonui", "New Zealand Malt Whisky" and "Blenheim Gin" whose names are tied to specific and unique local areas and reputation.

¹ Some well-known and popular GI spirits sold in New Zealand include: Armagnac (produced exclusively in France), Bourbon (USA), Canadian Whiskey (Canada), Cognac (France), Grappa (Italy), Irish Whiskey (Ireland), Ouzo (Greece), Scotch Whisky (Scotland), Tennessee Whiskey (USA), and Tequila (Mexico).

ENDS.

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