

Executive Summary

This submission respectfully urges the Commission to reconsider the proposed licence variations for Alice Springs CBD venues. While we acknowledge the genuine social challenges facing our community, these additional restrictions will significantly harm Alice Springs' tourism appeal without addressing the root causes of problematic alcohol consumption. We advocate instead for the Commission to recommend that Government focus resources on evidence-based, demand-side interventions that address problematic drinking behaviours at their source.

Tourism Impact: An Already Challenging Environment

Alice Springs is one of Australia's most iconic tourism destinations, yet our hospitality sector operates under some of the nation's most restrictive liquor regulations. The proposed variations will further diminish the visitor experience at a time when our tourism industry is working to rebuild and attract visitors to the Red Centre.

The proposed restrictions create significant barriers for tourists:

- Visitors arriving for lunch on Wednesday through Friday would be unable to order a full-strength beer before 3pm unless they order a "full meal" - a confusing and arbitrary restriction that creates an unwelcoming environment
- The requirement for identification systems at select venues creates an inconsistent and confusing patchwork of regulations that tourists cannot reasonably be expected to navigate
- These measures send a message that Alice Springs is an inhospitable destination, directly contradicting efforts to position the region as a premier Australian tourism experience

Tourism is a cornerstone of the Alice Springs economy. These restrictions, however well-intentioned, risk impacting our industry negatively and we ask that they be reconsidered.

The Evidence Does Not Support Further Supply-Side Restrictions

The hospitality industry has never been more regulated, yet social problems in Alice Springs have worsened despite increasingly restrictive measures. This suggests we are focusing regulatory effort in the wrong direction.

The data tells a clear story:

- Licensing NT's quarterly wholesale alcohol sales data shows that from 2018 to 2024, overall alcohol consumption in the Northern Territory trended downward, yet crime and antisocial behaviour increased during this same period
- In 2025, data indicates alcohol volumes increased, yet crime has actually decreased - not just in Alice Springs, but across the entire Territory

- Crime in Alice Springs is demonstrably lower on Mondays and Tuesdays, despite pubs and restaurants being open seven days a week, including before 3pm

If on-premises consumption before 3pm drives social problems, we would expect to see consistent patterns across all days of operation. We do not. This strongly suggests the proposed restrictions are targeting the wrong behaviours.

The Case for Demand-Side Intervention

Consumption of alcohol in licensed premises occurs in a safe, monitored environment where staff are trained in responsible service of alcohol and serving sizes are regulated.

The real issue is problematic demand, not supply at licensed venues. People seeking to avoid restrictions will continue to access alcohol through:

- Venues with less restrictive conditions
- Illegal secondary supply markets
- Consumption in unmonitored public spaces

These restrictions are costly, confusing to tourists, and will not address harmful behaviours or improve community outcomes.

Recommendations

We respectfully urge the Commission to:

1. **Reconsider the proposed variations** on the basis that they will harm tourism without addressing root causes of problematic drinking
2. **Recommend to Government** a shift in focus from supply-side restrictions on licensed venues to evidence-based demand-side interventions
3. **Advocate for sustainable funding** for community services, health services, and mental health services to deliver effective long-term programs, rather than continued short-term "pilot" approaches

It is beyond time to address problematic demand. Licensed venues in Alice Springs operate responsibly under extensive existing regulations. Further restrictions on these businesses will diminish the visitor experience, harm our tourism economy, and fail to improve community outcomes.

The path forward requires investment in services that address the complex underlying drivers of harmful alcohol consumption, not additional arbitrary restrictions on an already heavily regulated hospitality sector.