

SUBMISSION IN RESPONSE TO PROPOSED VARIATION OF LICENCE CONDITIONS – ALICE SPRINGS

From: Bill Yan MLA

I welcome the opportunity to respond to the Liquor Commission's proposed changes to Alice Springs licence conditions and I do so as a local member of our community. While I fully support strong measures to reduce alcohol-related harm and improve community safety, the current proposal is unbalanced, operationally problematic, and risks producing more harm than good.

My concerns focus on two major elements:

1. Mandatory on-premises BDR scanning for selected venues.
2. A new requirement restricting full-strength alcohol to "full meals" between 11:30am and 3pm (Wed–Fri)

These measures may appear administratively simple, but the practical, social, and economic impacts on the CBD and surrounding community are substantial. I urge the Commission to reconsider these proposals in their current form.

1. Community Safety Will Not Improve Under These Conditions

1.1 Displacement, not reduction, of harm

Excluding high-risk patrons from licensed venues during the day does not stop drinking. It merely pushes vulnerable people into:

- public spaces
- shopping centres
- parks
- the Todd Mall and Council lawns
- areas with families, tourists and retail workers

This is the precise pattern the Commission seeks to address, yet the proposal risks amplifying it.

On-premises scanning shifts the problem from controlled environments with RSA-trained staff to high-visibility public areas, increasing safety concerns for workers, shoppers, and the general public.

1.2 Confrontation and escalation at venue entrances

Mandating ID checks on daytime venues will increase conflict on the street. Door staff will be forced into tense situations with individuals:

- refusing to produce ID
- disputing bans
- intoxicated or aggressive
- unfamiliar with the system

This raises the risk of violence, places incidents directly into public view and increases risk to staff and patrons.

2. Local Businesses Are Being Unfairly and Disproportionately Burdened

2.1 Only a small number of venues are targeted

The Commission applies the most onerous conditions to four venues, despite acknowledging:

- multiple venues trade before 3pm,
- several have significant patronage,
- others also contribute to daytime drinking patterns.

Selective regulation risks being viewed as arbitrary and unsupported by evidence. If the problem is genuinely town-wide, regulating a small subset of venues is not an adequate or fair response.

2.2 Economic harm to the CBD

Mandatory scanning and full-meal requirements will deter:

- shift workers,
- local patrons,
- tourists,
- older residents,
- and workers on lunch breaks who simply do not carry ID.

This will lead to:

- reduced foot traffic,
- fewer jobs and shifts,
- potential venue closures,
- and a more deserted CBD—further undermining public safety.

We cannot strengthen the town centre by making it harder for businesses to trade.

3. The “Full Meal” Requirement Is Unworkable and Out of Step with Local Needs

3.1 Alice Springs is not a “restaurant lunch” economy.

Forcing people to purchase a “restaurant-quality full meal” to order a full-strength drink is unrealistic for:

- shift workers finishing early
- tradies on short breaks
- FIFO crews
- tourists in transit
- seniors socialising at lunchtime

This measure punishes responsible drinkers and undermines the hospitality sector that keeps many Alice Springs businesses afloat.

3.2 Unequal treatment across licensees

Many venues inside the 3km radius—and certainly within Alice Springs more broadly—are exempt from the full-meal restriction.

If the Commission believes this requirement is necessary to reduce harm, it should apply it consistently. If it does not apply it consistently, its justification is undermined.

Unequal regulation creates:

- competitive distortion,
- business uncertainty,
- and community frustration.

4. Legal and Administrative Concerns

4.1 An excessive and unreasonable impost on local business

The proposal places a significant compliance burden on venues that are simply not structured, staffed or resourced to manage the functions contemplated by on-premises scanning. Hospitality operators are experts in service, RSA, patron management and venue safety—not in running identity-verification systems, managing sensitive information, or interpreting the legal status of individuals presenting at the door. This has been and remains in the realm of specific outlets who have taken away liquor licenses.

Under the proposed system, small hospitality venues would be required to:

- operate digital ID-scanning hardware and software
- create and maintain a shared register with other licensees
- make real-time decisions about refusals based on multiple categories of orders or conditions

- manage disputes at the entrance
- ensure staff are trained to carry out all of the above safely and consistently

These are administratively heavy, high-liability responsibilities normally handled by larger organisations—not small hospitality businesses.

The risk of privacy breaches, misidentification, technical failures, and escalation at the door falls entirely on venues already operating under significant staffing and safety pressures.

This represents an excessive impost that is out of proportion to the operational realities of local hospitality venues in Alice Springs.

4.2 Proportionality under the Liquor Act

Under s 3 and s 49 of the Liquor Act, regulatory interventions must be:

- evidence-based
- proportionate
- reasonable

Targeting a handful of CBD venues with substantial new obligations—while exempting others—does not meet this threshold.

5. A More Balanced Approach

I support strong action to reduce alcohol-related harm, but effective solutions must:

- enhance safety, not displace risk
- support local businesses, not penalise them
- be equitable across venues
- involve proper levels of resourcing
- complement engagement, outreach and health support

Local venues already contribute by:

- providing free food and water,
- training staff in RSA,
- assisting intoxicated or vulnerable individuals,
- employing security,
- and engaging with police and licensing officers.

Regulation must build on this work, not undermine it.

In Conclusion

The proposed licence conditions, while well-intentioned, will:

- damage the local economy,
- deter responsible patrons,
- increase public-area antisocial behaviour,
- unfairly target a small group of businesses,
- place staff at risk, and
- create operational burdens that exceed what can reasonably be placed on hospitality venues.

Alice Springs needs smarter, fairer, community-driven solutions—not overreaching regulatory measures that shift the problem into the street and weaken the businesses that underpin our CBD.

I respectfully urge the Liquor Commission to reconsider these proposals and work collaboratively with local operators, police, service organisations and the community to develop measures that genuinely improve safety without undermining the economic and social fabric of our town.



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