

NORTHERN TERRITORY LIQUOR COMMISSION
DECISION NOTICE

MATTER: *OWN INITIATIVE VARIATION OF CONDITIONS OF PALMERSTON LIQUOR LICENCES [2026] NTLiqComm 4*

| LICENSEE | PREMISES | LICENCE NO. |
|--|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| Cazalys Palmerston Incorporated | Club Cazalys Palmerston | 81416400 |
| Endeavour Group Limited | BWS Bakewell | 80919180 |
| Endeavour Group Limited | BWS Gateway | FLL1004 |
| Liquorland (Australia) Pty Ltd | Liquorland Cellars – Oasis | FLL1042 |
| Liquorland (Australia) Pty Ltd | Liquorland Palmerston | 80903361 |
| Palmerston Golf & Country Club Pty Ltd | Palmerston Golf & Country Club | 81403928 |
| Prasanna Enterprises Pty Ltd | Gray Supermarket | 80915260 |

LEGISLATION: Section 113 of the *Liquor Act 2019* (NT)

CONSIDERED BY: Russell Goldflam (Chairperson)
Ms Jodi Truman (Deputy Chairperson)
Ms Elizabeth Stephenson (Health Member)
Mr Denys Stedman (Community Member)

DATE: 9 February 2026

DECISION

1. Having completed an inquiry pursuant to s 113 of the *Liquor Act 2019* (**the Act**), the Northern Territory Liquor Commission (**the Commission**) has determined not to vary the conditions of all or any of the liquor licences with a takeaway or grocery store authority in and in the vicinity of the suburb of Gray

in the city of Palmerston, NT, namely the licences at the following premises: BWS Bakewell, BWS Gateway, Cazalys Palmerston, Gray Supermarket, Liquorland Cellars – Oasis, Liquorland Palmerston and Palmerston Golf & Country Club (**the licences**).

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. The Northern Territory Government amend the *Liquor Regulations 2019* (**the Regulations**) to make the licences subject to the same conditions as are currently prescribed for licences in the Alice Springs local government area by rr 56A and 98B of the Regulations.
3. The Northern Territory Government re-initiate negotiations with the licensee of the Gray Supermarket to buy back its licence.

REASONS FOR DECISION

The inquiry

4. On 1 May 2025 Mr Clinton Howe MLA, the Member for Drysdale, requested the Commission to conduct an independent inquiry under the Act “into alcohol supply and associated harm in the suburb of Gray”. Mr Howe’s request is reproduced at Annexure One to this Notice.
5. On 8 May 2025 Palmerston Mayor Athina Pascoe-Bell wrote to the Commission supporting Mr Howe’s request. The Mayor’s letter is reproduced at Annexure Two to this Notice.
6. The Chairperson of the Commission invited Mr Howe to attend the next scheduled meeting of all members of the Commission on 26 May 2025. At this meeting, Mr Howe briefed the Commission in detail about the circumstances of his request, which can be summarised as follows:
 - There are 1,800 households in Gray, a quarter of which are public housing, the densest public housing in the Greater Darwin area. In addition, an additional 1,000 to 1,500 visitors from remote communities stay in the public housing complex in Gray at any one time.
 - The public housing complex is 100 metres from the Gray Supermarket, and there is frequent drunken fighting and other anti-social behaviour in the area.
 - Mr Howe’s electorate office has been deluged by complaints about this, many of which are directed at the Gray Supermarket, which sells takeaway alcohol, and, unlike shopping centre liquor outlets in the area, does not have its own private security.
7. At the same meeting, Ms Mel Garde, the Director of Liquor Licensing (**the Director**) briefed the Commission about the situation in Gray. The Director informed the Commission that:

- Licensing NT receives complaints about Gray “all the time, every day”.
 - Licensing NT has conducted detailed investigations of the Gray Supermarket, including examination of CCTV footage together with Banned Drinker Register (**BDR**) transaction data, to ascertain whether the licensee is compliant with the statutory requirement that customers’ ID be scanned before allowing takeaway alcohol to be purchased. No instances of non-compliance have been detected.
 - Licensing NT surveillance in Gray indicates that the source of much of the liquor being drunk in public in Gray is not the Gray Supermarket but nearby outlets in large shopping centres, such as Liquorland Oasis.
8. Having considered the representations by Mr Howe, Mayor Pascoe-Bell and the Director, the Commission determined to undertake an inquiry pursuant to s 113 of the Act to determine whether to vary the conditions of liquor licences in and in the vicinity of Gray (**the licences**).
 9. The Commission formed a panel of four of its members to inquire into alcohol supply and associated harm in the suburb of Gray. The principal focus of Mr Howe’s request was “the Gray shopping precinct liquor outlet”, or in other words, the Gray Supermarket, on Essington Avenue. However, the panel, noting that there are six other takeaway liquor outlets within walking or short public transport distance of Gray, determined to extend the scope of its inquiry to include those other outlets, as listed at the commencement of this decision notice.
 10. Liquorland (Australia) Pty Ltd, one of the largest liquor retailers in the nation, operates two local Liquorland outlets. Endeavour Group Limited, also one of the largest liquor retailers in Australia, operates two local BWS (Beer Wine Spirits) outlets. The licensee of Cazalys Palmerston and the Palmerston Golf & Country have the same principals. The remaining premises are the Gray Supermarket, the licensee of which is a small family business.
 11. The panel conducted separate meetings with each of the licensees, and met with both the Palmerston City Council and senior NT Police officers with responsibility for policing in Gray.
 12. In addition, the Commission undertook community consultation by posting the letter reproduced at Annexure Three to this Notice to 1,581 households in Gray. Approximately twenty Gray residents responded in writing.
 13. The Commission thanks all those who participated in the Commission’s consultations. The responses received were thoughtfully and carefully prepared, and the Commission has given them all serious consideration.

The statutory framework

14. The Commission performs functions and exercises powers in accordance with the provisions of the Act and the *Liquor Commission Act 2018*. Neither of these statutes expressly confers on the Commission the power to conduct an “inquiry” or an “investigation”. In most cases, the Commission’s functions and powers are engaged when it has been referred an application, complaint or other matter by the Director. The sole statutory provisions that confer power on the Commission to act on its own initiative are ss 113 – 115 of the Act, which relevantly provide:

113 Variation by Commission

- (1) The Commission may, on its own initiative, vary the conditions of a licence or an authority other than a condition added or varied by the Minister under section 88.
- (2) Before varying the conditions, the Commission must give the licensee a written notice that:
 - (a) states the proposed variation; and
 - (b) states the reasons for the proposed variation; and
 - (c) invites the licensee to submit a response to the proposed variation within 28 days after the date of the notice.
- (3) The Commission may vary the conditions of the licence or authority as proposed in the notice or in another way the Commission considers appropriate after considering:
 - (a) any response of the licensee submitted within the 28-day period; and
 - (b) the results of any hearing; and
 - (c) the public interest and community impact requirements.

...

115 Hearing by Commission about varying conditions

- (1) If the Commission considers it appropriate, the Commission may convene a hearing about whether to vary the conditions of a licence.

15. Two aspects of these provisions are of particular significance. Firstly, the only substantive power it confers on the Commission is to vary the conditions of a licence or authority. Notably, on its own initiative the Commission has no power to suspend or disqualify a licensee, or to cancel a licence: it can only do so if the Director has referred a matter to the Commission for disciplinary action. Secondly, s 115 provides that the Commission may convene a hearing, but only if it considers it appropriate to do so.
16. The only means available to the Commission to implement Mr Howe's request was by way of s 113, and the Commission proceeded accordingly. In this matter, the Commission decided that it was not appropriate to convene a hearing, but instead to facilitate the participation of the community in its inquiry by conducting the letterbox drop referred to above.

The licences

17. Cazalys Palmerston and the Palmerston Golf & Country Club make a comparatively minor contribution to the amount of takeaway liquor that is consumed in Gray. Cazalys Palmerston only sells takeaway liquor to its members. The Palmerston Golf & Country Club takeaway outlet is predominantly patronised by golfers, and sells alcohol at a considerably higher price than bottle shops.
18. The two BWS and two Liquorland bottle shops in the vicinity of Gray operate under the management of and with the substantial support, systems, policies, procedures and facilities provided by their large corporate proprietors.
19. The Gray Supermarket is a small, locally owned business operating on premises leased from a prominent Darwin property developer. The current licensee acquired the business in 2024, after having owned and run another small licensed supermarket with a grocery store authority in Anula. The licensee sold its Anula liquor licence to the former NT government under a "buy-back" scheme designed to reduce the number of grocery store authority liquor licences.

The problem: anti-social behaviour in Gray

20. The Commission has no hesitation in accepting the overwhelming evidence that alcohol-fuelled violence, anti-social behaviour and litter is particularly prevalent, harmful and serious in the suburb of Gray. NT Police track "hotspots" for anti-social behaviour, and report that Gray is high on the list, surpassed only by Parap, Palmerston City and Darwin City. As one local home owner informed the Commission:

We are subjected to daily yelling and screaming, people sitting, drinking, fighting in the local park, along footpaths around and opposite the shops and within the shopping complex itself. You cannot walk along the footpaths around and opposite the shops nor can you go to the shop without getting accosted by people

asking for money or being asked to buy alcohol and if you say no you cop a mouth full of abuse.

21. Of particular concern to the community and the Commission is the harmful effect on the children who are exposed to it. The Gray Primary School is 10 minutes walk from the Gray Supermarket.
22. Many of the public housing residences in Gray are “restricted premises” where the consumption of liquor is prohibited. There are no nearby public areas where it is lawful to drink alcohol. It is reasonable to infer that these circumstances contribute to the high incidence of unlawful drinking in public places and associated anti-social behaviour in Gray.
23. Many of the people the Commission heard from attribute the anti-social behaviour in Gray to the local liquor licensees, and in particular the Gray Supermarket. The Commission accepts that the anti-social behaviour is to a very significant degree alcohol-fuelled, and that it constitutes alcohol-related harm. The Commission also accepts that it is likely that the bulk of this alcohol has been purchased from local takeaway liquor outlets. However, it does not necessarily follow that these outlets are a substantial cause of this alcohol-related harm. A key question the Commission has asked itself is the extent to which the alcohol-related harm in the area would be reduced if it were not for the trade conducted by the local licensees.
24. As one long-term member of the community told the Commission:

In my opinion, 90% of the problem down there is the concentration potentially of Territory Housing down there. That's where the people live. Regardless of the location, regardless of the location of that particular bottle shop, those people that exhibit that behaviour live there and even if that bottle shop wasn't there, they're going to get their alcohol from somewhere and they're going to bring it back there. There's a hell of a lot of Territory housing down there. There's a hell of a lot of these people that are inclined to that behaviour that live in that area and I think that's the problem.

25. The Commission panel, three of whose members are ourselves long-term Darwin residents familiar with social conditions in Darwin and Palmerston, agrees. The Commission is of the view that the primary cause of the problems of anti-social behaviour in Gray is not the presence of takeaway outlets, but the presence of a large cluster of public housing in an area where there are limited public amenities and social services.

Solutions: what could the Commission do?

Remove the Gray Supermarket liquor licence?

26. Several respondents have urged the Commission to take action to remove the Gray Supermarket licence. In the words of one local resident:

I would like my community back... Please take the sale of alcohol out of suburban shops starting with the removal of a liquor licence at Gray shop. Let's go back to being able to buy milk and bread at our local shop without fear of being verbally abused, humbugged or harassed.

27. As mentioned above, the Commission has no power to cancel a liquor licence when undertaking an own initiative inquiry. The 2017 *Alcohol Policies and Legislative Review* led by former Chief Justice Trevor Riley found that there were too many takeaway outlets in the Northern Territory, and recommended that licensed grocery stores be phased out over seven years.¹ The Northern Territory government did not adopt that recommendation, but did issue an offer to licensees operating with a grocery store authority to sell their liquor licences back to the Northern Territory. The licensee of the Gray Supermarket responded to this offer, but the amount offered by government was considered by both the licensee and its landlord to be insufficient to enable it to remain viable as an unlicensed grocery store, and accordingly the offer was refused. Those negotiations were conducted with the former government. Given that Mr Howe, a member of the current government, was the driving force behind the Commission's decision to undertake this inquiry, the Commission recommends that those negotiations be renewed.
28. Regulation 53 of the Regulations requires grocery store authority licensees to restrict the gross value of the liquor they sell to no more than 25% of the gross value of their sale of all products. Gray Supermarket complies with this regulation, but the Commission's impression is that it has lost its "social licence" with many Gray residents, who have stopped shopping there because of the abuse, humbug and harassment. Were the Gray Supermarket to relinquish its liquor licence, it is reasonable to anticipate that it would regain its "social licence", and any resulting loss of trade would to a significant extent be compensated for by selling groceries to locals returning to their local shop for their daily needs.

Any variations should be applied to all local outlets

29. Although the Commission could vary the conditions of the Gray Supermarket, if such action reduced access to liquor from this outlet, Gray Supermarket patrons would simply transfer their custom to the nearest other takeaway outlets, Liquorland Oasis (10 minutes walk, or a free bus ride away) or Liquorland Palmerston (20 minutes walk, or a free bus ride away). To avoid moving rather than solving the problem, the Commission considers that any variation of conditions would need to be applied to all seven takeaway outlets in the vicinity of Gray.

¹ Riley Review, accessed at <https://dth.nt.gov.au/media/docs/publications/racing-gaming-and-licensing/alcohol-reform/alcohol-policies-and-legislation-review-final-report.pdf>, pp 47 – 48. Mr Denys Stedman, a member of the panel of the Liquor Commission conducting the current review, was also a member of the Expert Panel that conducted the Riley Review.

No basis to request the Director to investigate the Gray Supermarket

30. The Gray Supermarket has attracted strong criticism from the community. This is unsurprising, given its immediate proximity to the trouble “hotspot” where anti-social behaviour occurs. Section 158(1)(b) of the Act provides that on the request of the Chairperson, the Director must conduct an investigation into a licensee with a view to taking disciplinary action. After carefully reviewing all of the information received by the Commission in the course of conducting this inquiry, the Commission panel determined that it had not received any cogent evidence capable of supporting a finding that the licensee of the Gray Supermarket is operating in breach of the Act or its licence conditions. Moreover, the panel accepts that the Director and her office have previously investigated the licensee, and continue to actively monitor reports received regarding the operations of Gray Supermarket. For these reasons, the Chairperson, who is a member of the panel for this inquiry, determined not to request the Director to investigate the licensee.

POSIs or PALIs in Gray?

31. Some Gray residents have proposed that police be stationed outside the Gray Supermarket to deter trouble-makers. In Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and Katherine, police (POSIs) or police auxiliaries (PALIs) conduct stationary patrols outside bottle shops, and refuse entry to people who are unable to establish that they intend to consume the alcohol they plan to buy in a place where it is lawful to consume alcohol. POSIs and PALIs are widely regarded as having been an effective component of the suite of measures introduced by successive governments to reduce alcohol-related harm. However, they have not been introduced in Darwin, and the Commission accepts that, for cost reasons alone, there is no prospect of extending POSI or PALI operations to Darwin. For the reasons given above, the Commission considers that it would be ineffective to implement a measure that applied to only one of the outlets in the locality. It would also be seen to be unfair.
32. In any case, the Commission has no power to order the establishment of POSIs or PALIs at an alcohol outlet.
33. On the other hand, the Commission has power to order a licensee to employ or hire security guards.² However, private security guards do not have the point of sale intervention powers conferred on POSIs, PALIs and liquor inspectors by s 250 of the Act. The four large Liquorland and BWS outlets regularly engage private security guards, as, the Commission supposes, do the shopping centres in which their stores are located. The Commission considers that it would be ineffective, unfair to, unaffordable for and onerous on the licensee of the Gray Supermarket to require this small business to

² Conditions of this nature are prescribed by the Regulations for late night authorities and major event authorities.

employ or hire security guards. No other licensee with a grocery store authority in the Territory has been made subject to such a condition.

Reducing trading hours?

34. The Commission has considered reducing the takeaway trading hours of the licences, a proposal that has some community support. For example, the City of Palmerston Alcohol Management Plan dated November 2024 proposes an 18 month trial of restricting takeaway trading hours in Palmerston to the period between 11:00 hours and 20:00 hours.³
35. No licensees in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and Katherine are permitted to sell takeaway liquor on weekdays until the afternoon. Those conditions are prescribed by the Regulations. In the Darwin region, however, the Regulations provide that takeaway trading is permitted on weekdays from 10:00 hours to 22:00 hours, and on Saturdays from 09:00 hours to 22:00 hours. Licenses that operate with only a takeaway or grocery store authority are not permitted to supply liquor on Sundays. The Commission has the power to further restrict trading hours for individual licences in the Darwin region. However, the restriction of trading hours of the seven licences in the vicinity of Gray, but not to other licences in Palmerston or the Darwin region would create a less even playing field and inevitably result in many customers shifting their patronage to easily accessible alternative outlets. The restriction of trading hours was considered by the government to have been necessary, and appears to have been effective, in reducing alcohol-related harm in the relatively small and isolated urban centres of Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and Katherine. The Commission is not satisfied that this measure is required for all outlets in the Darwin region, and considers that imposing it for licensees operating in a small area of that region would be both ineffective and unfair.

Quantity restrictions?

36. The Commission has considered varying conditions so as to place a limit on the quantity of takeaway alcohol that may be sold to a customer. The Commission has decided not to proceed with this measure for the same reasons it has decided not to move to limit the licences' hours of operation.
37. However, the Commission notes that the licensee of the Gray Supermarket has a voluntary policy of restricting the sale of cask wine to one per customer per day. The BWS outlets in the area maintain a similar voluntary policy. For its part, Liquorland maintains a voluntary policy of not selling cask wine before midday. Although the Commission is not convinced that the licensees have the means to rigorously ensure compliance with these policies, the Commission commends them for taking this initiative, encourages them to maintain these policies, and suggests that the Palmerston Liquor Accord resolve to adopt this measure. If the Commission's recommendation referred

³ The Commission has not been informed of what action has been taken to implement this plan.

to at paragraph 43 below were to be adopted, full compliance with these initiatives could be achieved.

Limit takeaway purchases to one per person per day?

38. A related proposal received from local residents is that purchases of takeaway alcohol be limited to one transaction per person per day. This measure currently applies to all licensees with grocery store authorities and takeaway authorities in the Alice Springs local government area. It was initially imposed as an emergency measure by the Minister for Alcohol Policy on 23 January 2023, and confirmed by rr 56A and 98B of the Regulations, which commenced on 5 March 2024. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this measure has been effective in reducing alcohol-related harm in Alice Springs, is supported by key service providers, including NT Police, and has been welcomed by many in the community.
39. The Commission considers that implementation of this proposal for Gray would be in the public interest and would have a beneficial impact on the community.
40. To be effective, however, the implementation of this measure in Gray would require the modification of the software used by the scanning devices supplied to licensees by the Northern Territory government for the purpose of compliance with the patron identification system established by Part 6 Division 1 of the Act.
41. The Commission has previously issued decision notices in which it recommended that government modify the ID scanning software in accordance with community and licensees' wishes for the purpose of reducing alcohol-related harm.⁴ Government has not responded to or acted on any of these recommendations.
42. Based on its past experience, the Commission considers that if it varied the Gray licence conditions to limit purchases to one per person per day in conjunction with a recommendation that the ID scanning software be modified, there is little prospect that government would take up this proposal.
43. Accordingly, the Commission now instead recommends that the Northern Territory Government institute this beneficial variation of conditions by regulation, as it did to reduce alcohol-related harm in Alice Springs. The Commission is confident that the Government would only amend the Regulations in this way if at the same time it made the necessary modifications to the ID scanning software, as it did for Alice Springs.

⁴ Northern Territory Liquor Commission, *Second Variation of the Conditions of Licences* (13 January 2020, accessed at <https://agd.nt.gov.au/media/docs/liquor-commission/variation-of-conditions/Decision-Notice-Alice-Springs-s33-second-variation-130120.pdf>) at [12]; and Northern Territory Liquor Commission, *Variation of the Conditions of Licences* (28 May 2021, accessed at <https://agd.nt.gov.au/media/docs/liquor-commission/variation-of-conditions/barkly/variation-conditions-licences-barkly-region-decision-notice.pdf>) at [72] – [74], [75c]

Product restrictions?

44. The Commission has given careful consideration to varying conditions by imposing restrictions on the products that may be supplied. The cheapest type of alcohol sold by the Gray Supermarket is wine in a 2 litre cask, for \$30, at about \$1.50 a standard drink. The licensee's next cheapest products are bottled white wine, at about \$2.15 a standard drink, and beer, at about \$2.20 a standard drink. BWS and Liquorland stores in the area advertise bottled white wine for \$11, which is about \$1.57 a standard drink.
45. The Commission could impose a condition prohibiting the sale of 2 litre casks. However, the Commission is not satisfied that to do so would significantly reduce the level of alcohol-related harm. The sale of cask wine in containers larger than 2 litres is prohibited across the NT by rr 54 and 96 of the Regulations. That ban was first imposed in 2010 by the Northern Territory Licensing Commission,⁵ which found that 4 litre or 5 litre cask wine cost about \$0.40 a standard drink, about five times cheaper per standard drink than beer by the carton. The case for banning 4 litre and 5 litre casks in 2010 was far stronger than the case for banning 2 litre casks as they are currently priced from outlets in the vicinity of Gray. In coming to this view, the Commission has also taken into account the potential adverse impact of a switch to bottled wine due to the danger of broken glass, whether as litter or weapon.

Identifying point of sale?

46. The Commission has considered a suggestion made to it that licence conditions be varied to require licensees to distinctively mark the liquor containers they stock. This would assist officials including police and liquor inspectors to identify the outlet of origin when, for example, tipping out liquor that was being unlawfully drunk in a public place. This information could be a useful investigative tool in the detection and prevention of unlawful secondary supply or other breaches of the Act.
47. Assuming that the power to vary the conditions of a licence includes the power to impose such a condition (about which the Commission has some doubt), the Commission is unpersuaded that the benefits of this measure would outweigh the costs. It would be impracticable to mark individual alcohol containers that are sold in larger sealed packages, such as cartons of beer. In the absence of any details of how such a scheme would work to detect and

⁵ Northern Territory Licensing Commission *Reasons for Decision Review of the Restriction and/or Removal of Cheap and Problem Liquor Products, Particularly Four (4) and Five (5) Litre Wine Casks Including Their Hours of Sale* (1 September 2010), accessed at https://dth.nt.gov.au/media/docs/publications/racing-gaming-and-licensing/dob-databases/liquor/2010/pdf/100901_Four_and_Five_Litre_Wine_Cask_Review.pdf

deter offending, or any reports of how effective it has been in other jurisdictions, the Commission does not consider that it would be appropriate to propose this measure be established.

Strengthening the BDR

48. Part 6 Division 1 of the Act establishes a patron identification system that requires licensees to scan the ID of every person who attempts to purchase takeaway alcohol, and to refuse the sale to any person who is indicated by the scanning system to be on the BDR. Most people on the BDR are the subject of a Banned Drinkers Order (**BDO**) issued by police.
49. On 30 October 2025, the NT Police Territory Safety Division of the commenced the Darwin Centralised Social Order Concept, which operates across Darwin, Palmerston and Casuarina and “focuses on early interdiction, coordinated tasking, and targeted enforcement against the key drivers of anti-social behaviour (ASB) and alcohol-related harm”. In the first three months of this operation, police issued 829 BDOs, tipped out 7,339 litres of alcohol and conducted over 5,000 “targeted active patrols”.⁶
50. On 15 December 2025, amendments to the *Alcohol Harm Reduction Act 2017* came into force that increased the minimum period for police BDOs from 7 days to 28 days.
51. The Commission considers that there is a reasonable prospect that the recently extended police operations and powers described above will be effective to reduce access by harmful drinkers to takeaway alcohol in Gray.
52. However, as been considered in detail by the Commission in its concurrent s 113 inquiry into alcohol-related anti-social behaviour in Alice Springs, the effectiveness of the BDR is compromised by the ease with which persons on the BDR can evade the ban that has been imposed on them from drinking alcohol by going to a bar, pub or licensed club, where there is no BDR screening for drinking on the premises. The Commission supports the recommendations that on-premises BDR screening be trialled, as proposed by both the NT Coroner and the final report of *LEarning from Alcohol (Policy) Reforms in the Northern Territory (LEARNT)*, an Australian Research Council funded project comprising four linked studies that investigated the impact of the BDR.

Other measures

53. A theme running through the responses the Commission has received is that more effective action is needed to improve compliance with tenancy agreements by residents of public housing in Gray. The Commission agrees,

⁶ Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services, “Darwin Centralised Social Order Results” (Media release, 26 January 2026), accessed at <https://pfes.nt.gov.au/newsroom/2026/darwin-centralised-social-order-results#:~:text=Social%20Order%20Results-.Police,across%20the%20Greater%20Darwin%20region.>

although it is beyond the expertise and remit of the Commission to offer specific advice on how this could be achieved.

54. On 20 March 2025, the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Community Development presented a ministerial report on public housing reform in the Northern Territory to the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, in which he said:⁷

Our action plan for public housing reform includes strengthening policy to fast-track the pathways to eviction; a full review of the visitor management, tenancy management and Red Card policy; debt management policy reform; review of the *Housing Act 1982* to align with community expectations; and recommendations to the Attorney-General's Department for changes to the *Residential Tenancies Act* to align with community expectations.

55. On 31 January 2026, the Minister issued a media release stating that since the public housing reforms announced in March 2025, the government had “significantly stepped-up compliance and enforcement—cracking down on anti-social behaviour, pursuing unpaid rent, and fast-tracking consequences for those who do the wrong thing”, and 25 tenants in the Greater Darwin region had been evicted or had surrendered their lease. In addition, common areas of most public housing complexes and 27 homes have been declared Alcohol Restricted Premises.⁸

56. The Commission hopes that the government's public housing reform is working to reduce alcohol-related anti-social behaviour in Gray.

57. In her letter copied to the Commission dated 8 May 2025, Mayor Pascoe-Bell made the following five “immediate requests”. With respect, each of these requests appears to the Commission to be sensible and reasonable:

1. Funded increased security patrols in Gray throughout the day and evening.
2. Boost visible policing in the precinct to deter crime and improve public confidence.
3. Provide urgent funding to allow security upgrades to Gray Community Hall to protect legitimate users.

⁷ Accessed at <https://territorystories.nt.gov.au/10070/1002680/0/2>

⁸ “CLP cracking down on public housing tenants”, accessed at createsend.com/t-t-D2A918F3066BFCE22540EF23F30FEDED?fbclid=IwY2xjawPyK2tleHRuA2FibQIxMABicmlkETF4Zk_hzMzQ0eWdHskdkbJtc3J0YwZhcHBfaWQQMjlyMDM5MTc4ODIwMDg5MgABHizWY7zL3lwSkPmo7m5mRiu5I0cZRfzXxUYMwFXb2C5Bcw9pkPTSHaVX0Rq7_aem_dMIFH22I2pospU5xtYgmzw

4. Strengthen enforcement and behavioural management in DHLGCD-managed properties.
 5. Urgent review and inquiry into the availability of alcohol and liquor licensing in the vicinity.
58. The recent change to police operations described at paragraph 49 above may at least in part have met the request for a boost in visible policing. The public housing reform program referred to at paragraphs 54 and 55 above may have at least in part met the request for strengthened enforcement and behavioural management of public housing tenancies.
59. The Commission has now completed its response to the last of Mayor Pascoe-Bell's requests, although regrettably, due to unprecedented resource constraints under which the Commission has operated over the last year, it failed to complete its inquiry in a timely manner.

The purposes of the Act

60. In performing its functions under the Act, the Commission is required by s 3(4) of the Act to have regard to the primary and secondary purposes of the Act, and to perform its functions in a way consistent with these purposes. On the one hand, the primary purpose of the Act is "to minimise the harm associated with the consumption of alcohol". On the other hand, this purpose must be advanced "in a way that recognises the public's interest in the sale, supply, service, promotion and consumption of liquor." It can be seen that this single primary purpose comprises two components that may pull in opposing directions.
61. Consideration of the second of these components fortifies the Commission's decision not to vary the conditions of the licences. For the reasons given above, the Commission considers that varying the conditions of a single licence would merely move the problem, and not significantly assist in solving it. Alternatively, if the Commission were to propose similarly varying the conditions of the licences all seven nearby premises, which include four large bottle shops that service not only the suburb of Gray, but also the Palmerston CBD and residents of surrounding suburbs, there would potentially be a significant restriction on the availability of alcohol to a much larger cohort of drinkers. Whether or not this would be in the public interest, it is not something that was raised in the Commission's consultations in the course of this inquiry. There is little doubt, however, that had the Commission determined to propose variations to the conditions of the Liquorland and BWS bottle shops, a significant proportion of the people of Palmerston would have opposed such proposals on the basis that such variations would not be in the public interest, and would have an adverse impact on their community. This consideration of the broader community repercussions of any decision by the Commission to vary the conditions of Gray licences militates against issuing a notice proposing to vary the conditions.

62. For these reasons, the Commission has determined not to propose to vary the conditions of licences of takeaway outlets in and in the vicinity of Gray.



Russell Goldflam
CHAIRPERSON
NORTHERN TERRITORY LIQUOR COMMISSION
9 February 2025

On behalf of Commissioners Goldflam, Truman, Stephenson and Stedman

Clinton **HOWE** MLA
MEMBER FOR **DRYSDALE**

Time for Courage!



01 May 2025

Clinton Howe MLA

Member for Drysdale
Northern Territory Legislative Assembly
PO Box 1387
Palmerston, NT 0831

The Chair

Northern Territory Liquor Commission
GPO Box 1154
Darwin NT 0801

Request for Independent Inquiry into Alcohol-Related Harm and Liquor Licence Conditions in Gray and Palmerston

Dear Chair,

Residents of my electorate have asked that I write to you, to request, that the Northern Territory Liquor Commission conduct an independent inquiry, under the provisions of the Liquor Act 2019 (NT), into alcohol supply and associated harm in the suburb of Gray, with consideration given to the wider Palmerston area.

Over recent months, my office has consistently received concerns from constituents regarding alcohol-related issues centred around the Gray shopping precinct liquor outlet. These concerns primarily focus on public drinking, antisocial behaviour, violence, and impacts on community safety, local amenity, and the wellbeing of residents.

The issue in Gray predominantly involves intoxicated behaviour from visitors of other communities and, to a lesser extent, a small number of local residents. Given this specific context, an independent and targeted assessment is required.

Specifically, residents of the community request the Commission's inquiry addresses:

1. The operation, conditions, and management practices associated with the current liquor licence at the Gray shopping precinct.
2. The broader context of alcohol supply in Gray, including other sources and routes of alcohol entering the community.
3. Comparative analysis identifying why similar residential-area liquor outlets in Palmerston are not experiencing comparable levels of public disorder.

Clinton **HOWE** MLA

MEMBER FOR **DRYSDALE**

Time for Courage!



In the interests of transparency, I will present Community feedback received by my office regarding both sides of this matter, which includes:

Concerns:

- Elevated volume of alcohol-related complaints specific to Gray.
- Documented incidents involving alcohol-related harm and violence.
- Proximity of the bottle shop to sensitive community sites, notably Gray Primary School, and the exposure young children are receiving to alcohol-related harm.
- Regular reports of social disruption, public nuisance, and diminished community wellbeing.
- Persistent alcohol-related littering in public areas.
- Violence and antisocial behaviour associated with the public bus stops and bus route near the liquor shop.
- Ongoing nuisance public drinking in public parks, including Dunbar Park and the Gray Community Garden.
- Disruption and intimidation to seniors' groups meeting at the Gray Community Hall.
- Secondary Supply occurring throughout the suburb.

Supportive Views:

- Assertions that antisocial behaviour largely stems from alcohol brought into the suburb from elsewhere.
- Reports of the licensee demonstrating adherence to responsible service of alcohol with a high refusal rate.
- Observations that most antisocial behaviour occurs off-premises, beyond licensee control.
- Community members valuing local availability and convenience of alcohol purchases.
- Concerns about unfairly penalising compliant businesses for broader social issues.

A comprehensive inquiry by the Liquor Commission will provide clear, evidence-based insights and foster community confidence in the decision-making process. Ensuring transparency and independence in this process is crucial for balanced outcomes respected by all stakeholders.

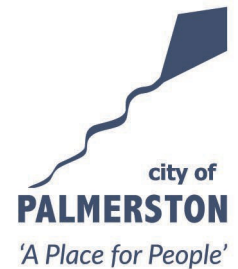
I thank you in advance for your consideration and remain available to facilitate additional community consultation or provide further assistance as required.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Clinton Howe'. The signature is stylized and fluid.

Clinton Howe MLA
Member for Drysdale
Northern Territory Legislative Assembly

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



ID: 628827 – APB:ks

2 May 2025

Mr Clinton Howe MLA
Member for Drysdale
Country Liberal Party
Tenancy T53, Gateway Shopping Centre, 1 Roystonea Avenue
YARRAWONGA NT 0831

Dear Mr Howe


Gray - Impact of Anti-Social Behaviour

I am writing to express the Palmerston community and Council's growing concerns regarding the significant increase in antisocial behaviour and alcohol-related harm within the suburb of Gray. I understand your office has received similar feedback from constituents, and I appreciate your recent letter to the Northern Territory Liquor Commission requesting an independent inquiry into this matter.

The City of Palmerston supports your call for a formal investigation under the Liquor Act 2019 (NT) into the impact of liquor licensing and alcohol supply in Gray. We respectfully request that the Liquor Commission take urgent action to:

1. Review the operation, conditions, and management practices of the liquor outlet in the Gray shopping precinct.
2. Investigate the broader sources and routes of alcohol supply contributing to harm within the community.
3. Provide recommendations to reduce public drinking, violence, and social disorder across affected areas.

Gray's shopping precinct on Essington Avenue has become a consistent hotspot for alcohol-related offences, including assaults, domestic violence, public intoxication, and other antisocial behaviours. Most recently, on the 29 April a female was attacked by four women in the car park to the shopping precinct resulting in hospitalisation and minor injuries to a male who intervened.



Properties along Emery Avenue, Priest Circuit, and Victoria Drive are heavily impacted, diminishing local amenity and resident wellbeing. The Council has actively supported interagency responses on several Department of Housing, Local Government and Community Development (DHLGCD) properties in this area with little to no success.

Of particular concern is the escalating dangerous behaviours and misuse of Gray Community Hall and its undercroft by intoxicated individuals, including visitors from remote communities. These behaviours have resulted in the presence of drug paraphernalia, human waste, domestic violence, aggressive conduct, and ongoing disruption to legitimate user groups—including seniors' organisations. This has adversely affected bookings and compromised perceptions of safety in our public spaces.

Some examples of community sentiment are as follows:

“After the event, staff transferred our belongings from the hall to the carpark. Around 15 people were sitting and standing on the veranda outside the hall's front doors. They were arguing, and two men were getting very heated, and it looked like they were ready to fight. My colleagues were in the carpark ready to leave. I quickly ran over to tell them not to leave me alone and to wait for me, as I was worried for my safety. I noticed they also go to the toilet along the side of the building where the meeting room is. We had to weave in and out from them.

.....

“Unfortunately, we will not be using the Gray community hall on the 1st of March. We drove past on Saturday at 11am and many people were underneath the shade structure at the front. There were a couple of people fighting, smoking, lying on the ground and even a person bent over? vomiting (not sure if he was intoxicated). As we left the car park the police just parked up on the side to address the situation. It is a shame we cannot use this space as it was THE perfect venue for our son's first birthday. For future, I'm not sure whether you can change the bus stop location as it doesn't help having it on the same side as the community hall and perhaps a fence needs to be put up? ”

Year to date 11 private hirers/community organisations have cancelled bookings due to safety concerns, with a further 15 lodging complaints regarding the anti-social behaviour encountered around the hall. It is forecasted without intervention that antisocial behaviour around Gray Community Hall and throughout Gray will continue to increase reducing liveability and amenity for our residents.

The Community Garden has also been impacted with volunteers having to face the behaviours and attend to the mess left behind when tending to the gardens. Community facilities, open spaces are increasingly becoming unsafe and unusable for our residents.

Dunbar Park is attracting significant concern from the community and residents of Gray. The City of Palmerston has received complaints regarding the amount of rubbish, illegal alcohol consumption, drug use, domestic violence, assaults, and disorderly behaviour within the park area. A bus stop is also situated on Essington Avenue near the park which large groups of intoxicated persons utilise for transport purposes and loitering, which impacts Palmerston community members utilising the service.

During November 2024 and January 2025, regular patrols were conducted of Dunbar Park to ascertain which community members were frequenting the area. This information was regularly relayed back to the Daily Patroller's meeting daily.

Key Community Concerns Include:

1. The high frequency of alcohol-related complaints specific to Gray.
2. Proximity of alcohol supply to sensitive community locations, such as Gray Primary School.
3. Regular public drinking and antisocial activity in public parks including Dunbar Park and the Gray Community Hall.
4. Alcohol-related littering, social disruption, and violence around bus stops and the precinct.
5. Secondary supply and unmanaged alcohol flow into the community.

Council's Immediate Requests

1. Funded increased security patrols in Gray throughout the day and evening.
2. Boost visible policing in the precinct to deter crime and improve public confidence.
3. Provide urgent funding to allow security upgrades to Gray Community Hall to protect legitimate users.
4. Strengthen enforcement and behavioural management in DHLGCD-managed properties.
5. Urgent review and inquiry into the availability of alcohol and liquor licensing in the vicinity.

The City of Palmerston strives to be "A Place for People." To achieve this, we must ensure our residents feel safe and are safe in their community and public spaces.

I welcome the opportunity to work with you and the Northern Territory Government in responding swiftly to these issues.

I respectfully request that this matter continues to be raised in Parliament and prioritised across all relevant departments.

Yours sincerely



Mayor Athina Pascoe-Bell

ANNEXURE THREE

Northern Territory

LIQUOR COMMISSION

To the Household/Occupant.
Suburb of Gray, Palmerston NT 0830

BY POST ONLY,

Dear Occupants

Liquor Commission Inquiry into reducing alcohol-related harm in Gray

I am writing to invite you to have your say in an Inquiry the Northern Territory Liquor Commission is conducting into what action it can take to reduce alcohol-related harm in the suburb of Gray.

The Liquor Commission decided to conduct this Inquiry after concerns about widespread anti-social behaviour in Gray were raised with us by both your local Member of the Legislative Assembly, Mr Clinton Howe MLA, and the Mayor of Palmerston. The Commission has met Mr Howe, the Palmerston Council and the Director of Liquor Licensing to discuss this, and is also meeting with local licensees and NT Police. We also want to hear from you.

The focus of our Inquiry is on licensees who sell takeaway alcohol. That is because we believe that the problems that have been reported to us are more associated with alcohol that is drunk away from licensed premises at a private residence or in a public place, rather than alcohol that is drunk in a pub, bar, club or restaurant.

The Liquor Commission has the power to vary the conditions of takeaway liquor licences in your neighbourhood. For example, we could restrict the days and times when licensees are allowed to sell alcohol. We could also restrict the containers, quantity and types of liquor that may be sold. We could require licensees to take reasonable steps to ensure public order and safety, and to prevent annoyance caused by people going to or away from the premises. We could impose the same conditions on all of the takeaway outlets in your neighbourhood, or impose different conditions on different licensees.

If you want to have your say about these issues, please write down your ideas and email them to the Liquor Commission at liquor.commission@nt.gov.au.

When the Liquor Commission has considered all the submissions it has received from the community, it will publish a notice saying what (if any) variations it proposes to make to licence conditions. Any affected licensees will then be invited to respond to the Commission's proposal within 28 days, after which the Commission will decide what to do and publish a notice of its decision.

If you do decide to make a submission, please say whether you agree to being publicly identified by the Commission as a contributor to the Inquiry. Submissions are open until 5:00 pm on 30 January 2026.

Yours sincerely



Russell Goldflam
Chairperson
Northern Territory Liquor Commission
4th December 2025

Northern Territory Liquor Commission
Attorney-General's Department
Supreme Court Building, State Square, Darwin NT 0800
GPO Box 3946, Darwin NT 0801
Tel: 08 89996802

| Liquor.Commission@nt.gov.au