

**NORTHERN TERRITORY LIQUOR COMMISSION**  
**DECISION NOTICE**

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**MATTER:** *APPLICATION FOR GENERAL RESTRICTED AREA OVER PARADISE FARM [2024] NTLiqComm 55*

**FILE NO.:** LC2024/047-3

**APPLICANT:** Ms Violet Lawson

**AREA:** Paradise Farm  
Kakadu Highway  
KAKADU NT 0886

**LEGISLATION:** Part 8 Division 3 of the *Liquor Act 2019* (NT)

**HEARD BEFORE:** Mr Russell Goldflam (Chairperson)  
Ms Elizabeth Stephenson (Health Member)  
Ms Katrina Fong Lim (Community Member)

**DATE OF HEARING:** 27 November 2024

**DATE OF DECISION:** 27 November 2024

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**Decision**

1. For the reasons set out below and in accordance with s 177 of the *Liquor Act 2019* (NT) (**the Act**) the Northern Territory Liquor Commission (**the Commission**) has determined to declare a general restricted area (**the GRA**) over the Paradise Farm outstation situated on land owned by the Kakadu Aboriginal Land Trust.
2. In accordance with s 172 of the Act, the Commission will declare the GRA by *Gazette* notice specifying that:
  - a. The boundaries of the GRA are as depicted in Annexure One to this decision notice.
  - b. Other than in accordance with a permit issued under s 201 of the Act (**a liquor permit**) that has not been revoked or suspended, the following are prohibited in the GRA:
    - i. The bringing of liquor into the area;

- ii. The possession of liquor in the area;
    - iii. The consumption of liquor in the area; and
    - iv. The sale, supply and service of liquor in the area.
  - c. The Director of Liquor Licensing (**the Director**) may on their own initiative suspend a liquor permit of a resident of the GRA for a period of up to six months with immediate effect.
  - d. The Director must consult with the residents of the GRA and have regard to the Paradise Farm Community Alcohol Plan<sup>1</sup> when considering:
    - i. an application for a liquor permit;
    - ii. the conditions of a liquor permit, including the quantity and type of liquor to be permitted, and the places at which liquor may be possessed and consumed by the permit holder;
    - iii. suspension of a permit; or
    - iv. revocation of a permit.
  - e. The declaration of the GRA expires in 99 years.
3. By way of compliance with s 178 of the Act the Commission has determined to publish information about the GRA by posting this decision notice on the Commission's website, and by sending a copy of this decision notice to:
- a. Kakadu Aboriginal Land Trust
  - b. Northern Land Council
  - c. Gunbang Action Group, Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation
  - d. Warnbi Aboriginal Corporation
  - e. NT Police
  - f. Attorney-General and Minister for Tourism and Hospitality
  - g. Minister for Alcohol Policy
  - h. Alcohol Policy, Northern Territory Department of Health
  - i. Office of Aboriginal Affairs, Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet

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<sup>1</sup> Exhibit One, pp 63 – 70

- j. Harm Minimisation Unit, Northern Territory Department of Health
  - k. National Indigenous Australians Agency
4. The declaration of the GRA will take effect on the date of publication of the *Gazette* notice referred to above.
  5. The Commission considers that it is not necessary to take steps to warn the public of the GRA at the places where a road or other customary route enters the GRA.

## **Reasons**

### **Introduction**

6. Paradise Farm, also known as Mardugal, is a family outstation on the Kakadu Aboriginal Land Trust and is located 50km south-west of Kakadu. Access to the outstation is via a dirt track off the Kakadu Highway, with a locked gate at the entrance.
7. The sole residents of the outstation are the traditional owners and their families. No children reside at the outstation.
8. The family live and work on the outstation. The three houses on the outstation are comfortably distanced, with two adults residing in each property. The family run two separate businesses: an environmental services contracting business and a native plant nursery.
9. The relevant history, circumstances and legal issues pertaining to this matter are similar to those set out in the decision of the Commission dated 19 June 2024 to declare a General Restricted Area for Itchy Koo Park.<sup>2</sup> It is unnecessary to now repeat the detailed consideration of those matters set out in that decision.

### **The Application**

10. On 22 August 2024, Dr Ian Crundall (**Dr Crundall**) submitted an application on behalf of Ms Violet Lawson (**Ms Lawson**), Traditional Owner of Paradise Farm and Red Lily homelands, to apply for Paradise Farm be declared a General Restricted Area. The application was accompanied by a letter (**the letter of support**) signed by the six Paradise Farm residents and three adult children who occasionally visit: Peter Christophersen, Sandra McGregor, Margaret Rawlinson, Matthew Rawlinson (**Mr Rawlinson**), Ms Lawson, Toni Ruse, Babylon Williams, Kallum Christophersen, and Tarrah Christophersen.

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<sup>2</sup> *Application for General Restricted Area over Itchy Koo Park [2024] NTLiqComm 25*

## Consultation

11. Section 175 of the Act requires the Director to give notice of a proposed GRA to:
  - a. Any licensee whose licensed premises are in the area – there are no such licensees.
  - b. Any applicant for a licence whose proposed licensed premises are in the area – there are no such applicants.
  - c. Any licensee whom the Director considers may be affected adversely by the proposed restriction – the Director did not consider that there was any such licensee.
  - d. Any local council in the proposed area – the Director notified both the West Arnhem Regional Council and the Northern Land Council. Neither of these councils responded.
12. Although not required to do so, Licensing NT notified Warnbi Aboriginal Corporation, an organisation formed by Traditional Owners to provide essential services and community development to the outstations of Kakadu, who did not raise concerns about the application.
13. Section 175 also requires the Director to take reasonable steps to consult with the people who reside in the area. Dr Crundall, who is engaged to assist communities in preparing community alcohol plans, has visited the community and consulted with Paradise Farm members, who the Commission is satisfied are well aware of the circumstances of the application, and support it.
14. In addition, the Director consulted with NT Police, who support the application.

## Director's Report

15. In accordance with s 176 of the Act, on 7 November 2024 the Director provided the Commission with a report (**the report**) that included the following documents:
  - a. Application for general restricted area dated 14 August 2024
  - b. Letter of support for application signed by nine residents and family members
  - c. Record of Administrative Interests and Information for Kakadu Aboriginal Land Trust
  - d. Draft map of proposed GRA
  - e. Community Alcohol Plan for Paradise Farm

- f. Notices of application sent to Northern Land Council, NT Police, West Arnhem Regional Council and Warnbi Aboriginal Corporation
- g. Email from NT Police supporting application
- h. "BUSHTEL" community profile for Paradise Farm

### **The hearing**

- 16. On 27 November 2024, the application proceeded as a public hearing. Mr Matthew Rawlinson (**Mr Rawlinson**) appeared for Ms Violet Lawson, Senior Traditional Owner and applicant. Mr Wood appeared for the Director. Dr Crundall, contracted by the Department of Health, also attended and participated in the hearing. The Commission thanks them all for their attendance and assistance.
- 17. Pursuant to s 23 of the Act the Commission is not bound by the rules of evidence and may inform itself in any manner it considers appropriate. The Commission conducted the hearing with a minimum of formality.
- 18. The report, together with a map prepared by the Commission setting out the potential boundary of the GRA, were admitted into evidence.
- 19. On behalf of the applicant, Mr Rawlinson provided the following information at the hearing:
  - a. He is the son-in-law of Ms Lawson, Senior Traditional Owner, and is a resident of Paradise Farm.
  - b. The residents require the GRA to cover a square boundary around the houses only, not the entire area.
  - c. He supports the conditions set out at paragraph **Error! Reference source not found.** above.
- 20. On behalf of the Director, Mr Wood supported the application, together with the conditions set out at paragraph 2 above.

### **ASSESSMENT OF THE APPLICATION**

- 21. Section 177 of the Act requires the Commission to consider:
  - a. the application;
  - b. the Director's report;
  - c. the public interest and community impact requirement.

## The application

22. The Commission finds that the application complies with the requirements for applicants set out at s 174 of the Act. Section 3 of the application (“Consent of the registered owner of the area”) is signed by Ms Lawson, who describes herself as “Traditional Owner and local signatory to Kakadu Aboriginal Land Trust”. As the registered owner of the area is not Ms Lawson, but the Kakadu Aboriginal Land Trust, the application is in this respect irregular. The same issue arose in similar circumstances when the Commission considered an application for a GRA over Itchy Koo Park. For the reasons given at [2024] NTLiqComm 25 [41] to [54] in that matter, the Commission now finds that despite the irregularity, the application now under consideration is valid.
23. The Commission now turns to consider the substance of the application.
24. In addition to requiring that an application be in the approved form, s 174 provides that it must include:
- a. A detailed explanation of the restriction being proposed;
  - b. A detailed description of the proposed general restricted area.
  - c. The reasons for the proposed restriction.
  - d. A copy of a community alcohol plan, if any.
25. The Commission is satisfied that the applicant has provided sufficient detail of the restrictions it proposes, and, noting that they are supported by the Director, the Commission considers that those restrictions are appropriate, as reflected in this decision.
26. The Commission notes that its determination of the boundary it has specified is solely for the limited purpose of declaring the GRA. The Commission does not intend or purport to determine, declare or affect the property rights of Paradise Farm traditional owners vis a vis the property rights of traditional owners of any neighbouring community areas.
27. The Commission is satisfied with the applicant’s reasons for imposing the restrictions proposed.
28. The applicant has prepared and provided a community alcohol plan. GRA applicants are not required to develop a community alcohol plan, but the Commission commends the applicant for having done so, and strongly encourages any future applicants to do so. The Commission accepts the submissions of the applicants, the Director and the Harm Minimisation Unit that the Paradise Farm community alcohol plan has been developed by the community, has the support of the community, and is strong. The Commission notes that the plan is compliant with regulation 111B(2) of the *Liquor Regulations*, which prescribes that a community alcohol plan must include measures aimed at:
- a. Managing the supply of alcohol in the community.

- b. Reducing demand for alcohol in the community.
- c. Reducing harm or risks of harm that may be caused the consumption of alcohol in the community.

29. The Commission finds that the Paradise Farm community alcohol plan is fit for purpose and thoughtfully formulated.

### **Whether issuing the licence is in the public interest**

30. To determine whether the declaration of the GRA is in the public interest, the Commission is required to consider how the issue of the licence would advance the following objectives set out in section 49(2) of the Act:

- (a) minimising the harm or ill-health caused to people, or a group of people, by the consumption of liquor;
- (b) ensuring liquor is sold, supplied, served and consumed on or in licensed premises in a responsible manner;
- (c) safeguarding public order and safety, particularly when large numbers of people would be attracted to licensed premises or an area adjacent to those premises;
- (d) protecting the safety, health and welfare of people who use licensed premises;
- (e) increasing cultural, recreational, employment or tourism benefits for the local community area;
- (f) promoting compliance with this Act and other relevant laws of the Territory;
- (g) ensuring each person involved in the business conducted at licensed premises receives training suitable to the person's role in the business;
- (h) preventing the giving of credit in sales of liquor to people;
- (i) preventing practices that encourage irresponsible drinking;
- (j) reducing or limiting increases in anti-social behaviour.

31. Having considered each of these objectives, and having particular regard to the contents of the Paradise Farm community alcohol plan, the Commission is comfortably satisfied that it is in the public interest to declare the GRA.

### **Whether the issue of the licence will have a significant adverse impact on the community**

32. To determine whether it is satisfied that the declaration of the GRA will not have a significant adverse impact on the community, the Commission must consider the matters set out at section 49(3) of the Act, which are:

- (a) the risk of undue offence, annoyance, disturbance or inconvenience to persons who reside or work in the vicinity of the proposed licensed premises or who are using, or travelling to or from, a place of public worship, a hospital or a school;
- (b) the geographic area that would be affected;
- (c) the risk of harm from the excessive or inappropriate consumption of liquor;
- (d) the people or community who would be affected;
- (e) the effect on culture, recreation, employment and tourism;
- (f) the effect on social amenities and public health;
- (g) the ratio of existing liquor licences and authorities in the community to the population of the community;
- (h) the effect of the volume of liquor sales on the community;
- (i) the community impact assessment guidelines issued under section 50;<sup>3</sup>
- (j) any other matter prescribed by regulation.<sup>4</sup>

33. The Commission is satisfied that the declaration of the GRA will have a modestly beneficial impact on the community, having particular regard to the s 49(3)(d) and (e) matters. If the declaration were not made, the interim alcohol protected area would continue, and the Paradise Farm traditional owners and other residents would justifiably feel frustrated and disempowered. Conversely, issuing the GRA is a gesture of respect and acknowledgement to the Paradise Farm community. Noting that the regulation of liquor on Aboriginal land in the Northern Territory has in recent years been subject to various statutory changes, the Commission considers that the declaration of the GRA will provide a measure of certainty to the community regarding the management of alcohol into the future.

### **The liquor permit scheme**

34. Part 8 Division 6 of the Act establishes a permit scheme administered by the Director, who determines applications by persons to bring liquor into a GRA, possess or control liquor in a GRA, and consume liquor in a GRA. The Director also has the power to revoke a liquor permit, and pursuant to this decision, will also have the power to suspend a liquor permit for up to six months.

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<sup>3</sup> In the view of the Commission, no such guidelines are currently in force.

<sup>4</sup> There are no such "other" matters prescribed by regulation.



35. This decision requires the Director to administer the permit scheme for the GRA in consultation with the community and in accordance with the community alcohol plan.

### **Expiry**

36. Section 172(3)(c) of the Act provides that the declaration of a general restricted area must specify when the declaration expires. If the law clearly authorised the Commission to decline to fix an expiry date for a general restricted area declaration, the Commission would not have fixed an expiry date in this matter. However, out of an abundance of caution, in order to ensure that the declaration is compliant with this provision, the Commission has specified an expiry date in the distant future.

### **Warning of general restricted area**

37. Section 181 of the Act provides:

- (1) The Commission must take all steps it considers necessary to warn the public of a general restricted area at:
  - (a) The places where a road or other customary route enters the general restricted area; and
  - (b) The customary departure locations for any vessels or aircraft travelling into the general restricted area.
- (2) The warning must state the following:
  - (a) the details of the declaration;
  - (b) a summary of the offence against section 173;
  - (c) any other matters the Commission considers appropriate.

38. As with the Itchy Koo Park GRA, the Commission considers that it is not necessary to take any steps to warn the public of the Paradise Farm GRA, having regard to the following matters:

- a. The only road access to Paradise Farm is via a dirt road off Kakadu Highway.
- b. Paradise Farm is within the Kakadu Aboriginal Land Trust, an interim alcohol protected area effectively subject to the same prohibitions and restrictions on liquor as the GRA. Anyone who enters Kakadu is already on land where alcohol is restricted, and must have passed warning signs to that effect.
- c. With the exception of a two campgrounds less than one kilometre away, there are no tourist attractions near Paradise Farm.

- d. The risk that anyone would unwittingly bring liquor onto the GRA in circumstances amounting to an offence against s 173 of the Act is low.
- e. Such warning signs would send a message to passers-by that people who live in the area have a particular problem with alcohol, and that they either do not want alcohol to be allowed on their community, or that a government has decided that they must not be allowed to have alcohol on their community. Such a message would be false, misleading and apt to promote negative and unfair stereotypes.

### **The objects of the Act**

- 39. Section 3(4) of the Act provides that in performing its function to decide whether to issue the licence, the Commission must have regard to the primary and secondary purposes of the Act.
- 40. The Commission considers that making the GRA declaration together with the conditions it has determined to impose, is consistent with the purposes of the Act.

### **NOTICE OF RIGHTS**

- 41. Section 31(1) read with section 60(3) of the Act provide that the decision set out in this decision notice is reviewable by the Northern Territory Civil and Administrative Tribunal (**NTCAT**). Section 94(3) of the *NTCAT Act* provides that an application for review of a reviewable decision must be lodged within 28 days of the date of the decision.
- 42. In accordance with section 31(2) of the Act, the persons who may apply to NTCAT for a review of this decision are the applicants, the Director and the Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Health.



Russell Goldflam

CHAIRPERSON  
NORTHERN TERRITORY LIQUOR COMMISSION  
17 December 2024

On behalf of Commissioners Goldflam, Stephenson and Fong Lim



# Annexure One

