



17 December 2025

Mr. Russell Goldflam
Chairperson
Northern Territory Liquor Commission

Dear Mr Goldflam

**IRIS Submission to Proposed Variations of Licence Conditions
LC: OMV:2025-001 – Response under s 113(2) of the Liquor Act 2019 (NT)**

1. INTRODUCTION

I write on behalf of IRIS Capital representing Lasseters Hotel Casino, Diplomat Hotel and Uncles Tavern, Mercure, Gap View Hotel and Todd Tavern and I thank the Commission for the opportunity to respond to the *Notice of Proposed Variation of Licence Conditions* dated 20 November 2025.

While I acknowledge the Commission's intent to reduce alcohol-related harm and antisocial behaviour in the Alice Springs CBD, we oppose the proposed licence variations on the basis that:

- The causal link between daytime on-premises consumption and CBD antisocial behaviour is unproven.
- The proposed measures are disproportionate, impose significant operational and financial burdens, and contradict established government policy.
- They risk unintended negative community, tourism, and economic impacts, while failing to address the primary drivers of antisocial behaviour.
- Existing laws and mechanisms already provide adequate tools to respond to problematic individuals without imposing blanket restrictions on compliant licensees
- The current compliance of nominated venues in adherence to existing rules, regulations and the responsible service of alcohol and antisocial measures that they have in place.

2. FULL STRENGTH ONLY WITH MEAL WEDNESDAY THURSDAY & FRIDAY:

Full-strength alcohol only with a full meal from 1130 hours until 1500 hours on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, full-strength liquor must not be supplied, sold, served or consumed on the premises except when served with a full meal.

The Notice asserts that increased incidents in the Yeperenye Centre around 15:00 on weekdays are "causally associated" with on-premises drinking earlier in the day (paras 17–24). However:

iriscapital.com.au

(02) 9251 6498
Sydney NSW 2000
GPO Box 5479
Sydney NSW 2001

- The Commission acknowledges multiple contributors to antisocial behaviour, including extreme heat, social dysfunction, unmet health needs, homelessness, and violent incidents occurring *even when takeaway outlets are closed* (para 21). LC_OMV_2025-001
- There is no statistical evidence demonstrating that patrons exiting licensed venues are the majority of those involved in disturbances.

Interestingly Saturday trading at BWS and Liquorland does not show a high incidence of anti-social behaviour, which on the hypothesis presented by the Commission would support the contention that extended bottle shop trading Wednesdays to Fridays would alleviate the concerns of the commission regarding CDB antisocial behaviour on these days. A quick and more cost-effective way of dealing with the situation at hand.

The Commission's inference is largely anecdotal and not supported by quantitative analysis, police briefings, or CCTV-verified tracking and no evidence has been produced to support the commissions proposed variation and the impact it might have on CBD antisocial behaviour.

This condition offers a further level of regulation and restriction in what is already the most heavily regulated and restricted jurisdiction in Australia. These measures are unique in their breadth and intensity compared to other towns and cities across the country.

- Takeaway alcohol bans on certain days: No takeaway alcohol sales are permitted on Mondays or Tuesdays in Alice Springs.
- Limited trading hours: Bottle shops have shorter operating hours compared to other parts of Australia.
- Volume limits: Restrictions on the purchase of cask wine, fortified wine, and other liquor products to prevent bulk buying.
- Mandatory ID checks: All takeaway alcohol purchases require ID scanning against the Banned Drinker Register (BDR), which prevents individuals with alcohol-related offences or orders from buying alcohol.
- Minimum Unit Price (MUP): Alice Springs retailers voluntarily maintain a \$1.30 per standard drink minimum price, even after legislation lapsed, to discourage cheap bulk alcohol sales.
- Community-specific bans: Most nearby Aboriginal communities have complete alcohol bans, enforced under NT law

A concerted effort is being made by businesses, Tourism Central Australia Tourists, and the Alice Springs Chamber of Commerce to reinvigorate tourist visitation to Alice Springs and Central Australia after an unprecedented amount of negative publicity over the past eighteen months or so.

Proposed "Full-Strength Alcohol Only with a Full Meal" Condition is disproportionate and impacts responsible patrons, tourists, and business trade. It restricts legitimate social drinking such as a single beer or wine with no intention of intoxication; it undermines tourism experiences by deviating from nationwide hospitality norms and it imposes an unreasonable regulatory burden on venues already compliant with RSA obligations.

Tourists are not a 9-to-5 schedule, some who might not necessarily want to consume a meal should not be restricted from enjoying an alcoholic beverage of their choice on premises before 3pm.

These restrictions are inconsistent with other jurisdictions in Australia. Shift workers / early starters in construction, essential services, transport are unfairly disadvantaged by the restrictions denying them the same amenity available to other members of the community.

Many venues named have no connection to CBD disturbances. The Commission accepts that multiple licensees—including restaurants, hotels, resorts and suburban clubs—do not contribute significantly to CBD behaviour (paras 34–36), yet they are nevertheless subjected to the same restrictions on full-strength alcohol service. This is inconsistent with procedural fairness and the purpose of targeted harm minimisation.

The Commission presents no evidence that restricting full-strength alcohol between 11:30 and 15:00 reduces harms, the rationale relies entirely on assumptions about intoxication risk and not on evidence-based policy.

RSA & existing conditions already address intoxication risk. RSA-trained staff are fully empowered to: Refuse service, exclude patrons, monitor consumption and provide free water and food. The Commission even commends these measures at Todd Tavern and other venues (paras 42–43).

Further restrictions could, reduce patronage, harm lunch and early-afternoon trade and make Alice Springs less attractive for conferences, tourism, and hospitality investment

There is also the risk of displacement rather than a reduction in harm, tighter restrictions often push problematic drinkers to public space, riverbeds, Unsheltered locations and areas with no RSA oversight. This reduces safety rather than improving it.

3. ON PREMISES IDENTIFICATION SYSTEM

The Commission proposes to vary the conditions of Todd Tavern, The NT Rock Bar, Bojangles Saloon and Dining Room, and Uncles Tavern (the nominated licences) by inserting the condition of an on-premises identification system to screen persons who seek entry to the licensed premises before 15:00 hours on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays:

The introduction of an on-premises identification with access to BDR, banning notices, exclusion orders, bail requirements, court order and venue exclusion information directly contradicts established NT Government policy. The Commission itself acknowledges that the NT Government does not support BDR scanning for on-premises consumption (para 64). LC_OMV_2025-001.

Previous attempts to expand the BDR have met with a refusal of some government departments to share knowledge and information with licensees, with this expanded eclectic cohort of contributors it seems impossible to capture for the purpose of sharing information that will be held by and accessible to a third-party system operator.

Sharing banned persons' identities and photographs between licensees (para 66) exposes operators to, legal liability for data breaches under the Notifiable Data breach scheme security risks, ethical concerns and possible reputational harm if information is mishandled or challenged.

The Government's position is clear BDR technology is intended for takeaway sales only. It is not appropriate for the Commission to introduce a de facto expansion of BDR policy through licence conditions when the Government explicitly rejected Recommendation 32 of the Coronial Inquest for on-premises scanning.

There is no evidence that screening reduces daytime antisocial behaviour. Unlike nighttime precinct studies in Queensland (para 68), the proposed conditions apply to a small regional CBD setting, not peak visitation periods or late-night crowds but to daytime social drinkers and venues not presently operating as nightclubs or high-risk environments. There is no comparable evidence base to justify its introduction in Alice Springs.

The chairperson makes out quite well in item 32 of his correspondence the RSA initiatives implemented by the licensee of the Todd Tavern however now appears to want to impose another level of complexity again at considerable time and expense to the licensee.

There is a further onerous obligation by the licensee to

To prohibit entry to their licensed premises for a period that has not expired for a period of not less than 48 hours for each person who the licensee has refused entry or who the licensee has removed from the premises in accordance with s 141 of the Act and also maintain and share with the licensees of the nominated licences a register of persons who are subject to a banning decision made by the licensee, including the name, a photograph (if available to the licensee) and the banning period for each person on the register.

The licensee must also refuse entry to the licensed premises to any person who does not present an apparently authentic form of identification that is recognised by the on-premises identification system, is identified by the on-premises identification system to be a person subject to an order, condition, notice, provision or decision, fails or refuses to undergo screening by the licensee, licensee's employee or licensee's agent using the on-premises identification system, is intoxicated, violent, quarrelsome, disorderly or incapable of controlling their behaviour.

Requiring all patrons to undergo scanning between 11:30 and 15:00 on certain days, creates entry bottlenecks and safety risks from crowds forming outside venues, requires additional staff, hardware, and administrative oversight and imposes ongoing costs on licence holders with no demonstrated benefit, the obligations place on the licensee is particularly draconian and onerous.

Unintended Economic and Social Consequences may damage hospitality industry viability contrary to the secondary purposes of the Liquor Act. Hospitality venues already face, staffing shortages, rising security costs, declining tourism confidence due to negative media and increasing operational expenses.

Given there is a significant cost to industry in implementing scanning technology any implementation should be accompanied by government assistance to help fund the initiative

4. LASSETERS UNDUE OFFENSE, DISTURBANCE ETC.

The Commission proposes to vary the conditions of the nominated licences and the Lasseters Hotel Casino licence by inserting the following condition: Practices relating to disturbances The licensee must take reasonable steps –

(a) to prevent undue offence, annoyance, disturbance, noise or inconvenience to people who reside, work, study, worship or attend facilities that provide goods or services in the vicinity of the licensed premises, resulting from entertainment or activities on the licensed premises or the conduct of people making their way to or from the licensed premises.

(b) to ensure public order and safety.

Remedies for the described behaviour under section 285 of the liquor Act enforceable by NT Police are already contained in the liquor Act. The Liquor Commission has existing powers to sanction licensee's. The addition of this condition to a liquor license only adds another level of unnecessary and redundant bureaucracy.

Lasseters contends that the proposed “Practices Relating to Disturbances” Condition Is Unworkably Vague. The condition requires licensees to take “reasonable steps” to prevent disturbances caused by people making their way to or from the premises (para 4).

The License does not control public space beyond their boundaries. The condition creates unclear compliance expectations (“reasonable” is undefined). It increases exposure to complaints and enforcement action without providing practical tools or support. It may place staff at personal risk if expected to intervene in violence occurring off premises. Other jurisdictions using similar clauses (e.g., SA) apply them to very different urban environments, with substantial police presence and established late-night precinct structures—not daytime regional trading

5. OBSERVATION: ON PREMISES BDR (Clause 62)

The BDR does not address the root causes of alcohol abuse or violence. Individuals who are banned can and do still engage in harmful drinking by obtaining alcohol through other means, such as through secondary supply, social networks and having alternate Identification to circumvent the register.

The effectiveness of the BDR at take away liquor outlets is questionable. The scans show a refusal rate of 0.01% NT wide. I would contend that any decrease in alcohol related hospital admissions can be directly attributable to the deployment of Police Auxiliary Licensing Inspectors (PALI’S) and Police Officers at take away liquor outlets.

The Police & POSI by their mere presence at these locations influence the purchase of alcohol patterns. Their ability to interrogate purchasers regarding home address, consumption location, as well as their access to various internal Police databases is a major deterrent to individuals who have been placed on the BDR and those that engage in antisocial or criminal behaviour.

The Alice Springs Liquor accord has long advocated for a smarter BDR. The BDR in its present form, is extremely limited in its scope, it does not capture and hold information that licensees can use to advise of “Reportable Transactions”, that are an obligation in the absence of POSI’s or police being on site at the venue.

BDR is sparsely populated: There are approximately three thousand eight hundred names on the BDR Territory wide. The Territory which has a population of approximately two hundred and fifty thousand people, twenty-five thousand or so live in Alice Springs.

Due to the outdated system that operates the BDR, it can take up to 72 hours for someone to be placed on the BDR system. On premises BDR inconveniences all customers, particularly the patrons that frequent licensed venues and do not consume alcohol.

The BDR only targets individuals who have been formally banned from buying alcohol, many individuals with alcohol problems or those engaging in harmful drinking behaviours may not be on the register.

Hospitality venues are focused on creating a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere. The use of the BDR in these settings will have a detrimental effect on customer experience and increase in anti-social behaviour.

The practical implications for the use of the BDR in on-premises would require considerable time, resources and cost for the venue.

6. CONCLUSION

We propose constructive alternatives, better Aligned with Evidence

1. Increased NT Police and Licensing NT presence during weekday afternoons.
2. Enhanced collaboration with the Liquor Accord to develop targeted responses for high-risk individuals.
3. Support for voluntary ID scanning pilots, not mandatory conditions.
4. Government investment in cooling facilities and youth engagement programs in the CBD.
5. Maintaining current licence conditions paired with strengthened RSA training and enforcement (as already acknowledged in para 42).

These measures address the root causes of harm without penalising responsible operators and their patrons.

For the reasons outlined above, we respectfully submit that:

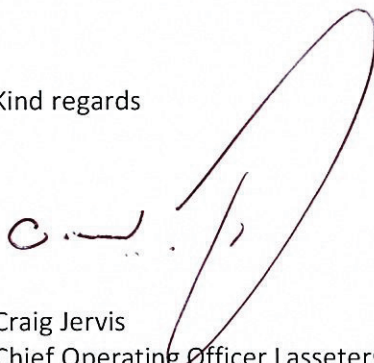
1. The proposed variations are not reasonable, proportionate, or evidence based.
2. They impose significant burdens on compliant businesses.
3. They will not achieve the intended harm-reduction outcomes.
4. They conflict with established government policy and undermine procedural fairness.

We therefore request that the Commission withdraw the proposed variations, or alternatively, apply targeted, evidence-backed measures only to venues demonstrated to contribute to the identified issues. We welcome the opportunity to discuss practical, collaborative solutions that uphold community safety while supporting a vibrant, sustainable hospitality industry in Alice Springs

In the absence of withdrawing the proposed variations IRIS Capital venues would urge the Commission to hold a public hearing in accordance with the Liquor ACT Amendment 2018 Committee's Comments 3.19: The Committee believes that the provisions to enable the Liquor Commission to hold public hearings when considering a variation to liquor licence conditions promotes transparency in decision making and is consistent with the principles of natural justice.

Please feel free to contact me should you require clarification or additional information by telephone [REDACTED] or email craig.jervis@lasseters.com.au

Kind regards



Craig Jervis
Chief Operating Officer Lasseters Hotel Casino
Owners Representative Alice Spings IRIS Capital