



03/12/2025

I speak for myself as a Licensee of 18 years in Alice Springs, and having poured my first drink 35 years ago, as an 18 year old.

I have been in Alice springs for 33 years. In this time, I have worked in Tourism and Hospitality in various roles including as a Tour Guide, a Barman, and owning three accommodation places. I have owned two Tour companies, and a Travel Shop. I have spent an inordinate amount of my own money and time selling the NT, and Alice Springs in particular, to thousands of people via Road shows and targeted Tourism events via Tourism NT and Tourism Central Australia.

I consider myself to be very experienced in many roles but especially in my role of Director and Manager of the NT Rock Bar.

I also consider myself to be very understanding of the differences in Indigenous Culture across the centre of Australia. Whilst not fluent, I understand many words in Pitjantjatjara and Luritja, with admittedly few Arrernte words. I believe after 30 years of studying Indigenous Culture, and owning a multi award winning Tour Company, both locally, nationally and worldwide, that my knowledge is fairly strong, although as is practice in traditional culture, I am still learning. I have been given the name of Tjamu, which means Uncle, by many of the Traditional Owners of Central Australia, and also received a skin name and inherited a totem from appropriated family members, (mainly due to longevity in the area.)

I think my experience gives me qualification to respond to the 21 pages of haphazard suggestions and recommendations by Russell Goldflam in his notice of proposed variation of licence conditions, not just for my business The NT Rock Bar, but essentially for the whole of the cbd, with the Casino added in for good measure.

In Central Australia we already have the strictest Liquor Licence laws in the whole of Australia, including our NT capital Darwin, whom whilst sharing some of our issues, has far less laws to abide by. Every time there is a new Chief Minister of the NT, which is as many as five in the last five years, pressure is put onto us as Licensees to change something. This has been going on for many years. New legislation is added, under the guise that it will fix the demand for alcohol, through limiting supply, or controlling

supply. We are still faced with the same problems that we had when I first arrived here in 1992!

We continue to tinker, adding new legislation, and it becomes a legal minefield, that pretty much only lawyers and educated Licensee's understand. New rulings often become subject to interpretation. In other words, Licensees and patrons find a way to adapt each regulation to fit their own requirements.

An example of the suggestion by Mr Goldflam that heavy beer can only be sold in conjunction with having a meal, could be for example that a customer purchases a Pizza, at a nominal fee of \$2, which the licensee adds to the price of the heavy beer. We could then all debate the ambiguity of what constitutes a meal. Is a bowl of chips a meal? If you put a pie on a plate, with some rocket, is it now a meal? How many people can share a pizza, with some rocket, meaning they can all drink a heavy beer, and for how long can they then go on drinking? Does Mr Goldflam suggest that having a meal means they can then drink for one hour, two hours or how many?

I would like to point out that the NT Rock Bar serves mid strength beer 70% of all sales.

We have security, despite it not being mandated/required by law. We have all staff with current RSAs. We have myself, the Director working onsite.

We don't allow intoxicated people into the premises and if someone becomes intoxicated, we work within the countless regulations to ensure that they are either monitored or asked to leave the premises. Any violent acts result in a banning and continuity of staffing and our own system, works very well without need for something more permanent which would no doubt be controversial and breach many laws including the Privacy act.

We often assist Police and Ambulance in their requests for footage and have just upgraded our CCTV system this year at a cost of \$17000. This has proved beneficial to Police and is always quicker than them going through their unmanned system for footage.

We have a fantastic relationship with most of our customers and are shown this with their loyalty to the venue. We treat people as people. We often have family groups sitting around without an alcoholic drink in sight, just talking. We provide endless supplies of cold water, and this is very much appreciated especially in the summer months.

We don't evict people if they are not drinking, even if we have people queuing outside. The patrons are very family orientated and we find that they look after each other if we do this.

This of course is at odds with what Mr Goldflam wants us to do. In one of his many pronged attacks on Licensed venues in the CBD, he suggested that people outside the venue, whether customers or not, should not be allowed to loiter/congregate, and that we as the Licensed premises should be responsible for this as well. As is the ruling in South Australia.

Whilst I understand where he is coming from, it is a long bow to draw and one that will be very difficult to monitor and police. Who is going to be able to have the time to police all of this? It won't be the actual Police or Liquor Licence Inspectors who are already busy enough.

Put simply, any further regulations added to the already complex laws that we already have, will just move the problem elsewhere. Can Mr Goldflam hand on heart state that if they do move elsewhere, they will be adhered to as well as they are already, especially in my own venue?

We already all do so much in Alice Springs. Remember this is a town that has a large percentage of Indigenous people, who legally have a right to drink a legal product and are seeking autonomy and self-determination. We are seeking to close the gap by introducing more race based legislation targeting one group of people. Really?

Alice Springs is also a town that has security guards on Just Jeans, so obviously there is a uniqueness to living here. I wonder if Mr Cole should perhaps tighten up his own security? Only last week, there was a machete attack, in front of Mr Cole, in the shopping centre that clearly had no link to any CBD pub. There is of course an attraction for people in the shopping centre to visit. The BWS!

I understand that approximately 20% of alcohol sales are on premise, whereby they are heavily governed and policed. If 80% is sold through take aways, wouldn't it be more prudent to increase on premise hours rather than seek to limit patronage? There doesn't seem to be much responsible service of alcohol once the cartons have left the shopping centre. I have also just been informed that we are losing two Liquor Inspectors by the end of the year through funding, which in conversation with Mr Goldflam, we all agreed wouldn't be the best result. We have worked hard with Inspectors to make a better and safer environment to drink in and getting rid of them makes their role illusionary.

I have also attached in confidence an email from Holly Sowerby dated 01/12/2025 of a decision notice regarding the outcome of a recent investigation against the NT Rock Bar, which proves that there are already a plethora of rules and regulations relating to the sale of alcohol, which we adhere to and adhered to, resulting in the complaint being dismissed. This is actual evidence, not hearsay, of the Liquor inspectors and Licensee doing the right thing and the system working.

It is a little incredulous of Mr Cole to complain about a certain group of people going into a shopping centre, which is there to attract people, and one which has a major attraction in one of its tenants in the BWS store! I wonder what they shareholders might say to this?

I resent the comments that it is The NT Rock Bar whose customers are causing the disturbance. I disagree and would seek evidence as to how the evidence was collated for this claim. Indeed, if it were to be proven that it was customers from the NT Rock Bar and one of Mr Goldflams' suggestions was to limit alcohol sales to mid strength until bottle shops were open, what evidence does he have to suggest that this might limit social unrest?

In the last three years, my sales have been up to 70% mid strength beer, which he is now suggesting should be the only choice. If serving mid strength beer was the solution, shouldn't we now have evidence proving this and not accusations thrown at us suggesting the opposite?

One last note is aimed at Headspace, who are within 100 metres of four cbd Pubs and many restaurants. Bojangles has been in the same spot for over 40 years. The NT Rock Bar has been there for nearly 19 years, and I believe Uncles for even longer. Moving into an area such as this and then complaining as they have done is a little like moving into a house next to an Airport and complaining about planes taking off and landing.

I also relieved an irate customer of Headspace, of an edged weapon outside the Loco burrito, only last month. In doing so I was protecting their client and their staff, who was nothing to do with any of the licenced venues in town. I did this as a concerned citizen in the absence of the Police and then provide cctv footage within the hour and aided in an arrest of the culprit who had come back and stabbed a shop keeper. The point being that this is a result of social disorder in Alice Springs, due to many factors, not exclusively to licenced premises. Perhaps Headspace should rethink where they are based and look at security, like other businesses in the cbd do?

I am frustrated that we must continually go through this kind of debate.

All I want to do is run my business. If I didn't have to continually think of ways to combat attacks from Government departments, my life would be so much better, and I could go about trying to help Alice Springs get back on its feet again by doing something positive.

I hope that my concerns are taken seriously and that the suggestions made in the letter to Licensee are not made legislation. I trust that Hospitality NT will help with all of our

legal arguments and will provide a legal response to you. If we are unsuccessful, we will take the decision to NTCAT, for the above reasons, as well as further reasons from other Licensees. It seems in the main that we also have the support of the majority of people surveyed recently through ABC radio and the news channels plus social media. I would also like to point out that the Police haven't supported any of these requests to date and nor has Licensing NT, and the Department of Tourism and Hospitality.

Regards

Jo

J W George

Director the NT Rock Bar

Director Discovery Tours NT

