



30 October 2020

Acting Deputy Commissioner
Northern Territory Liquor Commission
GPO Box 1154
Darwin, NT 0801

Dear Mr. Goldflam,

Re: review of conditions of liquor licences – Barkly Region

Firstly I would like to raise my disappointment at being give three days to respond to your letter dated 27 October 2020. This is not sufficient time to give proper consideration to what is a key issue for the Region.

I gather from this lack of notice that the commission does not consider Council to be a stakeholder on this matter, with the last correspondence being received from the commission on 9 January 2020. Fortunately Council convened a Council meeting on Thursday 29 October offering the following advice.

Council believes it is important that proper public consultation takes place regarding both the current restrictions and any proposed changes to those restrictions. When restrictions were imposed the community consultation was pathetic.

Council's view is that the current restrictions have assisted to reduce littering, public nuisance, public graffiti and other anit-social behaviour. However the restrictions do not appear to have had a significant impact on crime rates or support needed for disadvantaged youth. In other jurisdictions where alcohol volume restrictions have not been imposed have seen reductions in crime rates making a mockery of our current restrictions.

Secondary supply of alcohol from interstate and from north of the Barkly continues to be a significant issue. Anecdotal information indicates a significant supply of alcohol being purchased in Darwin, Katherine and Mount Isa continues to flow into both Barkly communities and Tennant Creek.

Council has the view that the current trading hours for take away liquor is overly restrictive and should be varied to allow outlets to open earlier, in line with other regional (Alice Springs & Katherine) liquor outlets. This may assist to reduce the demand for secondary supply currently flowing into our Region while offering additional spending opportunities for tourists in the Region. Longer trading hours will also assist to reduce the unsightly lines of people queuing to get into bottle shops portraying a poor public image to passers-by. PALI's can afford to man bottle shops in Katherine and Alice for longer shifts so Tennant Creek should be in line with these hours.



The discussion around current take away alcohol limits is an emotive subject. At present the maximum daily purchase is a 24 pack of full strength beer containing 36 standard drinks. Consumers have the alternate choice to purchase one 700ml bottle of spirits containing approximately 20 standard drinks or two bottles of wine containing 14 standard drinks. There are a number of other products that can be purchased, all below the 36 standard drink maximum restriction.

Council believes it would be appropriate to allow more flexibility within the 36 standard drink limit per day currently in place and supports this restriction. However, allowing a greater range of products to be purchased within that 36 standard drink maximum daily limit may assist to reduce secondary supply and offer much greater flexibility to consumers. An example would be to be able to purchase a six pack of beer (9 standard drinks) and two bottles of wine (14 standard drinks) for a total of 23 standard drinks, much less than the current maximum of 36 standard drinks for a carton of beer. The reintroduction of 1 litre bottles of spirits at approximately 30 standard drinks is also considered to be advantageous.

Council would also recommend standardising trading hours and restrictions throughout the Barkly, bringing them into line with the rest of the Territory. Council consider this to be a key issue with residents traveling from communities to Tennant Creek or Alice Springs as their local roadhouse may have other conditions imposed on them, Elliott is a prime example of this. The review should include, as a priority, completing the Alcohol Management Plan for Elliott which has been outstanding for a number of years as it is a source of frustration for residents.

While Council is sure there will be a wide spectrum of feedback on the current and any proposed restrictions, Council would like to urge caution. Supply of take away liquor within the Barkly is only a small part of the wider Alcohol supply question. While it is possible eased restrictions could reduce secondary supply, it is certain that tightening restrictions will increase secondary supply of alcohol, a problem Council is eager to avoid. The previous review also did nothing to address the consumption of alcohol on licenses premises.

Our economy is currently fragile, the current liquor restrictions are not helping this tenuous situation. Cattle station staff are increasingly choosing to travel to either Alice Springs, Mt Isa or Katherine to shop as they are able to purchase alcohol as well as groceries and other essential items. This is increasingly effecting Tennant Creek businesses with trade continuing to shrink.

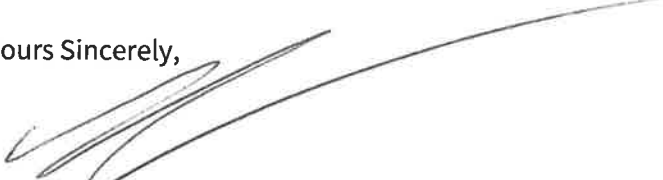
Most jurisdictions within the NT rely on the Band Drinker Register to control the supply of alcohol to problem drinkers. Council continues to be concerned that Barkly residents are being singled out for discriminatory treatment when it comes to purchasing alcohol. This includes purchases made by Tennant Creek residents in Alice Springs where PALI's manning bottle shops are now telling people they cannot take alcohol back to Tennant Creek? Perhaps police should be reminded that Tennant Creek is not a dry community but rather the fifth largest town in the Territory and should be treated in the same manner as Darwin, Palmerston, Alice Springs and Katherine.



At present Tennant Creek town camps are dry, this is not stopping people drinking but rather forcing people to drink at houses in Tennant Creek or at licensed premises, this needs to be addressed as it is leading to overcrowding in houses as people stay in town overnight to drink. Reviewing these restrictions should be considered as a priority.

Council are elected to represent the interests of the wider community and urge the commission to give careful consideration to the views raised in this letter. I am sure that special interest groups will lobby hard both for and against restrictions. It is imperative that a balanced approach be taken when considering any changes to the current restrictions. Should you require any additional information please contact me at your convenience.

Yours Sincerely,



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