



Robyn LAMBLEY MLA

Member for ARALUEN

Richard Coates
Chairman
NT Liquor Commission
Via Email: liquor.commission@nt.gov.au

Dear Chairman,

RE: Proposed Variations of conditions of liquor license in Barkly Region

My interest in the proposed variations of liquor licensing in the Barkly by the NT Licensing Commission is from a broader Central Australian regional perspective. My concern is that the introduction of these proposed restrictions and requirements which are targeted at two bars in Tennant Creek and one in Elliot could easily be applied to licensed premises in other regional centres. The possible implications for other regional centres of such extreme “conditions” are significant and not necessarily in the best interests of business and the broader community.

I do not believe that people attending bars or licensed premises anywhere in the NT want to have such intrusive requirements imposed on them.

The critical question is: why have these three licensed premises been selected and not others for these proposed conditions?

The NT Licensing Commission needs to be open and transparent about the rationale for this decision. If the decision is based on evidence that particular problem drinkers attend these bars, then that evidence needs to be provided.

The NT Labor Government and the Peoples Alcohol Action Coalition, who seem to drive both the Government’s and the NT Licensing Commission’s alcohol agenda, purport to have a strong philosophical commitment to evidence based decisions.
So what is the evidence?

These three hotels are viewed as having a higher Aboriginal clientele. Anyinginyi Health Aboriginal Corporation in their submission to these proposed conditions acknowledged the high impact of alcohol on the health of their Aboriginal patients and clients. Targeting any Liquor Licensing strategy on helping to reduce harmful levels of alcohol consumption by Aboriginal people is reasonable given the data, but some honesty around the reasons for this approach by the Licensing Commission needs to be provided. If these variations are about targeting problem Aboriginal drinkers, then the NT Licensing Commission needs to make that clear.

Given the dramatic increase in alcohol related assaults in Central Australia over the past 12 months it is reasonable to conclude the Banned Drinkers Register is not effective in reducing access to alcohol for problem drinkers. In the NT we know that the vast majority of assaults are alcohol related. Therefore any extension of the use of the Banned Drinkers Register is bound to have minimal impact, and so the introduction of these proposed conditions make no logical sense.

One of the problems with the Banned Drinkers Register is that there are only a small number of people actually placed onto the system. Perhaps the NT Licensing Commission should be recommending to the NT Government that before extending the use of the Banned Drinkers Register into bars, there needs to be a concerted effort by Government to have the relevant problem drinkers placed on the Banned Drinkers Register. This may have a greater impact on reducing alcohol related crime and the instances of problem drinkers neglecting their children.

How many people in the Barkly have been on the Banned Drinkers Register over the past 6 months? How many people have been refused service of alcohol over the past 6 months? This information should be in the public domain. And this information should be informing any decisions the NT Licensing Commission make in the Barkly.

Placing Banned Drinkers Register technology in the three proposed bars in Tennant Creek and Elliot will create an unfair market. As has already been highlighted by many stakeholders, people will choose to avoid the bars that have these conditions in place, and simply move to a different establishment. The NT Licensing Commission must consider the implications for business and take responsibility for the broader implications of their determinations.

The NT Licensing Commission's brief is only to look at alcohol strategies that address the supply of alcohol.

In order to address the serious alcohol problem in the Barkly the NT Government must address the demand for alcohol. This means to identify the actual problem drinkers and implement strategies that target those people. The Police, the health services, the Child Protection services, the education services and the relevant non-Government services in the Barkly know exactly who those people are.

Implementing these broad brush alcohol "conditions" only serve to inconvenience and annoy the vast majority of people who drink responsibly, The Banned Drinkers Register is meant to individually identify people that have a drinking problem and prevent them from accessing alcohol. It is failing to do that. Rolling out the use of the Banned Drinkers Register into these three bars will also fail in reducing alcohol related problems.

As an elected representative of the people of Alice Springs I have been actively participating in the debate around alcohol reductions strategies since 2004. There is evidence from the placing of the Police Outside of Bottle Shops from 2011 that imposing restrictions inconsistently on liquor licenses will not work. Not targeting the actual problem drinkers will also have minimal impact.

I think the most effective role the NT Licensing Commission could have in the Barkly is to make recommendations to the NT Government on alcohol demand and supply strategies that are evidence based, that will be efficient and effective and that will have positive effect on reducing alcohol consumption for problem drinkers whilst having minimal impact on the broader community.

Yours sincerely,



ROBYN LAMBLEY MLA
Member for Araluen
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