



31 July 2026

Committee Secretariat
Legislative Scrutiny Committee
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Dear Secretary,

LIQUOR AMENDMENT BILL 2026 (SERIAL 71)

The Association of Alcohol and other Drug Agencies Northern Territory (AADANT) thanks the committee for the opportunity to provide a brief response to this Bill.

AADANT is the peak body for Alcohol and Other Drugs treatment services in the Northern Territory (NT). As an independent, membership-driven, not-for-profit association, we work with our members to support and strengthen Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) service delivery for people who experience harmful substance use in the NT.

Banning notice exemptions

The Bill extends the maximum length of banning notices from 14 to 90 days, consistent with the recommendation of the Liquor Act three-year review. While intended to strengthen responses to alcohol-related harm, the banning notice regime is inherently punitive and potentially stigmatising. It primarily restricts an individual's access to public spaces and services rather than addressing the underlying health, wellbeing or alcohol and other drug (AOD)-related issues. The Bill does introduce a number of sensible exemptions, including for employment, accessing health care and medical treatment, and attending government services.

However, the Bill does not provide an exemption for accessing food or other essential goods. This omission may create unintended consequences, particularly in regional centres such as Katherine where shopping options are limited and essential services are concentrated within restricted areas. Individuals subject to a banning notice may be placed in the position of breaching the notice simply to purchase groceries or meet other basic needs, increasing the likelihood of further enforcement action without advancing the objectives of the legislation. Consideration should be given to extending the exemption framework to include access to food and other essential goods.

Conversion of Interim Alcohol Protected Areas to General Restricted Areas

The Bill converts all Interim Alcohol Protected Areas (I-APAs) to General Restricted Areas (GRAs), with alcohol prohibited by default regardless of previous interim arrangements. Communities wishing to permit alcohol in the future will be required to develop and obtain approval for a Community Alcohol Plan (CAP),

including consultation, evidence of community support, and approval by the relevant decision-maker. This change raises similar concerns to those expressed during the lapse of the *Stronger Futures* alcohol restrictions, when communities and stakeholders reported insufficient consultation on significant changes to alcohol regulation. Given the profound impacts these arrangements have on communities, these changes should be supported by meaningful engagement with affected communities.

Preparing a CAP is a substantial undertaking requiring time, expertise and sustained community engagement. The Committee should seek assurance that adequate resourcing, technical assistance and ongoing support will be available to assist communities that wish to pursue this process, particularly those with limited governance or administrative capacity. Without appropriate support, there is a risk that the required pathway to modify alcohol restrictions will be difficult for some communities to access in practice.

Commission own-initiative licence variation powers (section 113)

An amendment to section 113 introduces additional procedural safeguards where the Liquor Commission proposes to vary licence conditions on its own initiative. Before exercising this power, the Commission must provide notice to the licensee, allow a 28-day period for submissions and be satisfied that the variation is necessary to prevent harm or is otherwise in the public interest. This change strengthens procedural fairness and provides safeguards for the commission's discretion.

At the same time, the additional procedural requirements may reduce the Commission's ability to respond rapidly to emerging alcohol-related harms at licensed premises where timely intervention is required. This is not a strong objection to the amendment, but it is an issue the Committee may wish to consider in assessing whether the revised process achieves an appropriate balance between procedural fairness and the need for effective, responsive regulation.

We also wish to endorse the submission to this inquiry by the Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory (AMSANT).

Yours sincerely,



Stephanie Holmes

Executive Officer

Association of Alcohol and Other Drug Agencies NT (AADANT)