
NORTHERN TERRITORY LICENSING COMMISSION

MEDIA RELEASE

29 February 2008

Parts of Darwin declared “Dry”

The Licensing Commission has approved an application from the Darwin City Council for Bicentennial Park in Darwin and areas of the Coconut Grove, Nightcliff and Rapid Creek foreshores to be declared Public Restricted Areas (*see attached map for reference*).

The three person Commission heard evidence and considered written submissions on the application which was originally lodged by the Council on 6 March last year.

12 written responses were supportive of the application (none relating to Bicentennial Park) and a petition was submitted, signed by 51 people, largely representative of businesses in the Nightcliff/Pavonia Place area.

There were no submissions opposing the application. The declaration will take effect from 19 May 2008.

Licensing Commissioner Richard O’Sullivan said the submissions and discussions at community consultations had provided graphic examples of the adverse impact on people’s lives and businesses which had arisen from alcohol fuelled anti-social behaviour.

“People working in Pavonia Place have at times been so fearful of their safety they have felt unable to leave their premises without a Police presence,” Mr O’Sullivan said.

“This application has the support of the police, community groups and the local MLA Jane Aagaard – it is a valid application and there has been no opposition expressed before the Commission.

“In making this decision covering a relatively small area of Darwin, the Commission realises it is not the ideal solution to public drinking and related anti-social behaviour problems. This is but one tool in the battle against such problems – it is not a panacea for them.

“Effective enforcement will likely cause displacement and the movement of problem drinkers on to other areas, which could give rise to further and consequential applications for dry areas.

“The Commission is concerned about the potential of rolling applications in response to ongoing displacement and agrees with the Police submission to the Hearing that a holistic and more coherent approach is needed over the whole of Darwin.

“The Commission urges the Northern Territory Government and Council to work towards such an approach.”

Mr O’Sullivan said the Commission would be responsive to and co-operate with such a whole of Darwin approach.

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“We also note and are mindful of the recent announcement by the Chief Minister of a plan to tackle anti-social behaviour which includes dedicated response capacity to anti-social activity, increased provision of short term accommodation, further resourcing of the Return To Home program etc,” he said.

“We note a more broad use of Public Restricted Area legislation would increase enforcement powers and also enable designated and popularly used foreshores/parks/picnic areas to allow drinking for reasonable hours for week days and weekends.

“The Commission also notes the application does not include the popularly used area of the Nightcliff foreshore from ‘Sunset Park’ to Chapman Road which will continue to come under the 2km law and for which the Council currently allows drinking from 4pm to 10.30pm weekdays and noon to 10.30pm on weekends.”

The effect of the decision means consumption of alcohol at Bicentennial Park and the affected Coconut Grove, Nightcliff and Rapid Creek foreshores will require a permit from 19 May 2008.

If someone drinks alcohol within a Public Restricted area without a permit, police can:

- confiscate and dispose of any remaining liquor;
- issue an on-the-spot fine of \$100 by way of infringement notice;
- take the offender to court where they may be fined \$500.

Media contact: Lorelei Fong Lim, 0401116728

SOME BACKGROUND DATES:

6 March 2007	original application by Council CEO
8 November 2007	area applied for extended and further application made
18 February 2008	public consultation forums convened at the Council in Nightcliff
22 February 2008	Licensing Commission public hearing of application (note, no objectors)