

LICENSING, REGULATION AND ALCOHOL STRATEGY

Background to the Licensing Commission Decision

In September 2006 changes were made to the *Liquor Act* to allow for any public space in the NT to be declared a Public Restricted Area by the Licensing Commission.

Once declared, drinking alcohol in a Public Restricted Area is prohibited unless a specific permits obtained.

Such permits are for special occasions (see Fact Sheet 2 - Events and Functions in Alice Springs).

In October 2006, the Licensing Commission received an application from the Alice Springs Town Council, asking for the entire municipality to be declared a Public Restricted Area except for the picnic area of the Telegraph Station.

The Council stated:

- they were concerned about anti-social behaviour in Alice Springs resulting from the misuse and abuse of alcohol;
- that they saw such a declaration as one of a number of strategies to address the issue in the township;
- that they were prepared to support any applications by town camps; and
- that they would continue to work with government and others to address alcohol-related issues.

As part of its decision making process, the Licensing Commission conducted an inquiry into the application gathering information and statistics and consulting with stakeholders and the community. The Commission also held a public meeting in Alice Springs on the application.

During its inquiry:

- The Commission received 22 written submissions – 13 from individuals, nine from organisations.
- 13 formal oral submissions were made at the public meeting.
- The Commission visited three town camps.

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Among the issues raised through the oral and written submissions included a concern the many Alice Springs residents feel unsafe in their homes and streets because of the level of anti-social behaviour and violence in the town.

As well, there was a frustration at the increase in litter especially broken glass and a comment that visitors from outlying communities stay in Alice Springs for extended periods and drink to excess during their stay – often in public.

Submissions were also received stating that penalties are unlikely to be effective deterrents and that the measure only addressed a small part of the problem of anti-social behaviour.

After weighing up the information, statistics, submissions and expert advice, in May 2007 the Commission approved the Alice Springs Town Council's application to ban drinking alcohol in public places within Alice Springs.

The decision declared that from August 1 2007 public areas in Alice Springs will be off limits for drinking alcohol.

This applies within the boundaries of the following declared area:

- North to near the Motor Vehicle Registry;
- East to include Ross Highway and the former Chateau Hornsby;
- South to the Adelaide turnoff; and
- West to include White Gums and Ilparpa.

This entire area is now called a Public Restricted Area.

The Commission's decision included seven complementary measures to be implemented.

They are:

- 1) An effective communication strategy and a community education program to ensure details of the decision are known. These measures will include radio and television advertisements including some in language media releases to reach outlying communities.
- 2) Adequate policing of town camps and appropriate procedures to ensure any request for assistance is attended within an acceptable response time.
- 3) Sufficient community night patrols to service town camps and/or similar measures to help residents in dealing with liquor related issues.
- 4) Adequate access to phones by camp residents to ensure they can seek immediate police assistance if required and/or other complementary measures to ensure an acceptable level of communication between police and camp residents is available.
- 5) Practical assistance to residents in public housing to enable them to apply for their houses or units to be declared private restricted premises (ie Dry).
- 6) Practical assistance to various town camps should they wish to consider all or part areas within the camp becoming "Dry".
- 7) A dedicated officer from the Department of Justice to coordinate the provision and implementation of supporting complementary measures for town camps and public housing including the measures referred to above.

The declaration decision will be reviewed within 12 months of its commencement.

For further information contact Licensing and Regulation, Department of Justice on (08) 8951 8452.

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Other fact sheets available:

Alice Springs Liquor Supply Plan

Drinking in public in Alice Springs - what you need to know

- Fact Sheet – Declared Restricted Areas
- Fact Sheet – Events and functions in Alice Springs
- Fact Sheet – Penalties
- Fact Sheet – Restricted Premises – How to apply
- Fact Sheet – Photo ID System
- Fact Sheet – Photo ID System – Q&As for Licensees
- Fact Sheet – How to get Photo ID

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