

SHOP, DISTRIBUTIVE AND ALLIED EMPLOYEES'
ASSOCIATION (SDA) — SA/NT BRANCH

SUBMISSION TO THE LEGISLATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE INQUIRY INTO THE LIQUOR AMENDMENT BILL 2026 (SERIAL NO. 71)

Date Submitted: **31 July 2026** | Submission authorised by: **Josh Peak, Secretary**

To: **The Secretary, Legislation Scrutiny Committee,**
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Acknowledgement

The SDA acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters of the Northern Territory and pays respect to Elders past and present.

Executive summary

1. The SDA is the union for retail, fast food and warehouse workers. In the Northern Territory we represent workers employed in take-away liquor outlets and in licensed supermarkets and convenience stores.
2. This submission is confined to the provisions of the Liquor Amendment Bill 2026 that bear on the safety of workers in liquor retail settings and on alcohol-related harm in the community. The SDA makes no comment on the licensing administration, fee, transfer and wholesaler provisions of the Bill.
3. In response to the questions the Committee will report on:
 - Whether the Assembly should pass the Bill — Yes
 - Whether the Assembly should amend the Bill — No amendment is required to the provisions addressed in this submission
 - Whether the Bill has sufficient regard to the rights and liberties of individuals — Yes, in respect of the provisions addressed in this submission
 - Whether the Bill has sufficient regard to the institution of Parliament — The SDA makes no submission on this question
4. No amendment is required to the provisions addressed in this submission; however, the SDA recommends complementary consultation and worker-protection measures.
5. Reasons for those answers are set out below.

Interest of the SDA in this Bill

6. Retail liquor workers occupy a distinctive position in the alcohol regulatory framework. They are the point at which statutory restrictions — refusal of service to intoxicated persons, the Banned Drinker Register, restricted-area prohibitions — are actually enforced, transaction by transaction.
7. They do not choose their customers, control who enters the premises, or set staffing and security levels. Where restrictions are difficult to enforce, or where enforcement carries no durable consequence for offenders, the resulting risk is borne disproportionately by individual workers, most of whom are young and low-paid.
8. That risk is a matter of public record in the Territory. In March 2023, 20-year-old bottle shop worker Declan Laverty was fatally stabbed at the BWS attached to the Airport Tavern in Jingili, in circumstances reported to have followed a refusal of service shortly before closing. A jury found a man guilty of his murder in June 2024. The liquor retail industry has since run dedicated campaigns addressing aggression and violence directed at bottle shop staff, and public reporting continues to record armed robberies and assaults on liquor retail workers.¹
9. The SDA therefore assesses the Bill against a single question: does it make enforcement more effective and durable, so that less of the burden of managing dangerous behaviour falls on the worker behind the counter?

Clauses 20 and 22 — General Restricted Areas

10. The SDA supports the expanded consultation obligations in clause 20, including notice to the Commissioner of Police, the CEOs of the agencies administering the Alcohol Harm Reduction Act 2017 and the Public and Environmental Health Act 2011, and relevant local councils.
11. **Recommendation 1:** That the Committee recommend that, when exercising the discretion under proposed section 175(1A), the Director notify employees of affected licensed premises and their representatives of any proposed declaration, variation or revocation.
12. The SDA supports the retention in new sections 180A to 180H in clause 22 of a genuine community pathway to vary or revoke a declaration, supported by a community alcohol plan and by the public interest test in new section 180E, which requires the Commission to be satisfied that a variation or revocation is not likely to have a significant adverse impact on the community. That test appropriately preserves community decision-making while ensuring change is evidence-based rather than automatic.

Clauses 23, 24 and 25 — Enforcement powers

13. The SDA strongly supports these amendments.
14. Clause 23 expands the list of applicable offences under section 209 to include specified liquor-related, violence-related and public safety offences, including offences under the Criminal Code and the Domestic and Family Violence Act 2007. This ensures that banning notice and exclusion order powers can respond to the range of conduct that actually threatens worker and community safety, rather than a narrower subset of it. Particularly notable and welcome additions in the retail setting are the inclusion of the offences in sections 224 and 227 of the Criminal Code—damaging or interfering with property as a trespasser and shoplifting, respectively.
15. Clause 25 extends the maximum period of a banning notice under section 215 from 14 days to 90 days. This is the most significant provision in the Bill for our members. A 14-day maximum provides limited practical protection where an offender may lawfully return to the same premises a fortnight after a violent or threatening incident. A maximum of 90 days provides meaningful respite and signals that violence directed at retail workers carries a real consequence.
16. On the Committee's third term of reference, the SDA submits that clause 25 has sufficient regard to the rights and liberties of individuals. The clause expressly provides that a banning notice does not prevent a person entering or remaining in a high-risk area to attend work, attend a health care facility, receive medical treatment or access a government service. As a trade union, the SDA would not support a banning regime that severed a person's access to their employment or to health care. The Bill does not do so, and the SDA regards those carve-outs as essential to the proportionality of the extended period.
17. Clause 24's clarification that a police officer must produce police identification unless in uniform is a further appropriate accountability safeguard.
18. **Recommendation 2:** That the Committee endorse clauses 23, 24 and 25 without amendment.

Clause 26 — Police power to suspend a licence

19. The SDA supports the amendments to section 258 permitting the Commissioner of Police to suspend a licence or authority where the Commissioner believes on reasonable grounds that alcohol-related violence, riotous conduct or a breach of the peace is occurring on or in the vicinity of licensed premises.
20. The SDA notes that the power is appropriately constrained. It may be exercised only where the licensee has been given a reasonable opportunity to take steps to prevent the conduct and has refused or failed to do so, or where the conduct poses an imminent threat to public safety and suspension is reasonably necessary.
21. These safeguards are significant from a worker-safety perspective. They place responsibility on the licensee rather than workers on shift and create a direct incentive for licensees to provide adequate security, staffing and safe closing procedures.
22. **Recommendation 3:** That the Committee recommend that workers at affected premises suffer no loss of pay, shifts or other employment-related financial detriment arising from a suspension under section 258 where the suspension results from the licensee's failure to take reasonable steps.
23. **Recommendation 4:** That the Assembly pass the Liquor Amendment Bill 2026.

Recommendations

- » **Recommendation 1:** That the Committee recommend that, when exercising the discretion under proposed section 175(1A), the Director notify employees of affected licensed premises and their representatives of any proposed declaration, variation or revocation.
- » **Recommendation 2:** That the Committee endorse clauses 23, 24 and 25 without amendment.
- » **Recommendation 3:** That the Committee recommend that workers at affected premises suffer no loss of pay, shifts or other employment-related financial detriment arising from a suspension under section 258 where the suspension results from the licensee's failure to take reasonable steps.
- » **Recommendation 4:** That the Assembly pass the Liquor Amendment Bill 2026.

