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27 March 2026

Secretary  
Legislative Scrutiny Committee

By email to [LA.Committees@nt.gov.au](mailto:LA.Committees@nt.gov.au)

Dear Secretary

## **Submission on the Liquor Legislation Amendment (Fast Track Approvals) Bill 2026**

We refer to the Inquiry into the Liquor Legislation Amendment (Fast Track Approvals) Bill 2026 (**the Bill**).

The North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (**NAAJA**) provides high quality, culturally appropriate legal advice, representation and justice related services to Aboriginal people throughout the Northern Territory. For over 50 years, NAAJA has played a leading role in policy and law reform in areas affecting Aboriginal peoples' legal rights and access to justice.

In our view, the changes are flawed and unnecessary and the Legislative Assembly should not pass the Bill. Given the brief time available for comment, we have focused our submission on three key issues:

1. There has been a noticeable lack of meaningful community consultation on the Bill, including consultation with Aboriginal communities and organisations; and
2. The Bill will undermine community safety and confidence, by removing or reducing safeguards in the liquor licensing process; and
3. The changes appear designed to prioritise for-profit business interests over community interests and community harm.

These issues are discussed in more detail under the headings below.

We note that we have had the benefit of preparing this submission in consultation with the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (**FARE**). We have reviewed their submission to the current Inquiry and support their comments.

### **1. Inadequate consultation period**

We note that the Legislative Scrutiny called for comment on 19 March 2026, with submissions due the following week, on 27 March 2026. To our knowledge, there have been no public briefings on the Bill.

The Bill seeks to amend three separate but related legislative instruments, being the *Liquor Act 2019*, the *Liquor Regulations 2019*, and the *Liquor Commission Act 2018*. Together, they are a key part of our shared framework for reducing alcohol-related harm and improving community safety across the Northern Territory.

There is significant community interest in the development of alcohol related laws and policies, and it is widely accepted that Aboriginal communities (and individual Aboriginal people) are disproportionately impacted by alcohol-related harm. Given this context, we are concerned about the lack of community briefing on these changes, and the very tight timeframe for comment. Together, these factors have removed the opportunity for many relevant stakeholders – including Aboriginal community members and smaller community-controlled organisations – to make meaningful comment.

It is imperative that laws and regulations that will impact on Aboriginal people are developed with reference to the needs of the communities they serve. Accordingly, we **recommend** that the NT Government implement an inclusive, open consultation process before finalising any future legislative reform in this area. There is no genuine need to rush these changes.

## **2. Removing key liquor licencing safeguards**

One of the legislative instruments amended by the Bill is the *Liquor Act 2019* (NT) (**the Act**). Section 3(1) of the Act states that its 'primary purpose is to minimise the harm associated with the consumption of liquor in a way that recognises the public's interest in the sale, supply, service, promotion and consumption of liquor'.

We are concerned that the Bill seeks to reduce several of the protective mechanisms of the Act, particularly in relation to considerations of community impact and the public interest in the granting of liquor licenses. The proposed changes to s 49 and s 51 of the Act (see ss 8–9 of the Bill) create an exemption to these requirements for certain types of 'low risk' applications, defined in a new s 52A, with ultimate reference to the prescribed authorities set out in Schedule 2 to the Liquor Regulations 2019. These applications include smaller venues such as restaurants and catering authorities, and those associated with sporting events.

As FARE have noted in their submission, the definition of 'low risk' is flawed: while these authority types may be relatively 'low risk' compared with public bars and takeaway stores, they are still likely to have impact on the community and in some circumstances, to have a negative impact on the public interest. In our view, it is not appropriate to remove the requirement that public interest and community impact be considered in granting these types of licences.

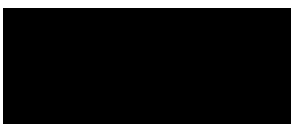
## **Conclusion**

The Bill should not be passed by the Legislative Assembly. Given the widespread harms caused in the NT by alcohol, it is not acceptable to jeopardise community harm for the benefit of for-profit businesses.

Rather, the NT Government should conduct further public consultations on the Bill, including with Aboriginal community controlled organisations and other community stakeholders, and consider strengthening provisions relating to the public interest and community safety.

NAAJA urges the NT Government to ensure that future laws are developed in genuine consultation with Aboriginal communities and organisations.

Yours sincerely



**Ben Grimes**  
Chief Executive Officer