



Northern Territory Branch  
**AUSTRALIAN HOTELS ASSOCIATION**



Telephone: (08) 8981 3650 Facsimile: (08) 8981 5754  
20/24 Cavenagh Street Darwin Northern Territory 0800  
PO Box 3270 Darwin Northern Territory 0801  
admin@ahant.com.au

8 May 2015

Mr. Nathan Barrett MLA  
Chair - 'Ice' Select Committee  
GPO Box 3721  
DARWIN NT 0801

Dear Mr. Barrett,

**'Ice' Select Committee Inquiry**

The Australian Hotels Association (NT) Branch is the peak employer representative for the Territory's hospitality industry. Our members are located all throughout the NT and comprise of five divisions; Accommodation Hotels, Restaurants, Hotels/Taverns, Clubs and Wayside Inns.

The AHA (NT) welcomes the inquiry by the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory into the prevalence, impacts and Government responses to the illicit drug colloquially known as "Ice."

Prevalence

The increasing use of 'Ice', stated by some health professionals to be at "epidemic" level is of most concern to the community because it predisposes users to become extremely violent, develop severe mental illnesses and become addicted to the substance.

Nationally, the head of a new Federal taskforce to combat 'Ice', former Victorian Police Commissioner, Ken Lay said, "We think that something like 200,000 Australians are using ice, and we think that 50,000 of them are using it at least weekly."

Whilst the AHA (NT) has not formally surveyed all our members on the prevalence of 'Ice' in and around licensed premises, given the nature of the hospitality industry, in particular late night entertainment precincts, there is evidence that suggests people do consume, buy and sell illicit drugs in and around licensed premises.

*It is likely that slightly more than 20 percent of the people attending Night Time Entertainment Districts in Australia had used some form of illicit drug*" (National Drug Law Enforcement Research Fund (n.d.) Patron Offending and Intoxication in Night-Time).

The AHA (NT) has received anecdotal information over the past several years that illicit drugs, in particular 'Ice' is affecting more people in and around licensed premises, particularly in late night entertainment areas. At the same time the information the AHA (NT) has received from the NT Police is that overall the number of incidences in and around licensed premises has decreased over the last several years.

Currently the overall alcohol consumption by Australians is at an all time low (Australian Bureau of Statistic). However, the experiences of the AHA (NT) and our members is that the incidents that are occurring in and around licensed premises have become more violent, overtly aggressive and disturbing. This suggests there is illicit drug use in and around licensed premises that is contributing to violence and other unacceptable anti-social behaviour, either with or without the consumption of alcohol.

Late night traders in Darwin City meet monthly with NT Police and Licensing Inspectors to discuss operational matters to ensure the City's entertainment precinct remains a safe and vibrant destination for both locals and tourists to enjoy.

During these regular meetings there has been anecdotal information and general discussion on the increase in people who seemed to be affected by illicit substances coming into contact with licensees, their staff and security, as well as other patrons.

Security guards have anecdotal evidence of people attempting to enter licensed premises in late night entertainment precincts appearing to have 'pre-loaded' on a dangerous mix of alcohol and illicit drugs. Hospitality staff are placed in precarious situations, as the behaviour of people on illicit substances, particularly 'Ice' can be unpredictable and extremely violent. Our advice to our Members is that they should contact the NT Police immediately and seek assistance to manage people suspected of being on 'Ice.'

With an increase in the number of people in our community on 'Ice', licensed premises have to increase their level of security of their cash and other goods onsite. There have been recent break-ins of licensed premises, with people addicted to substances, desperately trying to steal cash.

### Mandatory Testing

For the past several years the AHA (NT) has been seeking the support of the Government to introduce legislation for mandatory drug testing of persons involved in violent incidences, particularly in and around licensed premises. This type of testing currently occurs for traffic offences.

Drug testing persons detained by the NT Police who are suspected or charged with committing a violent offence is an initiative which would allow NT Police, the Northern Territory Government and industry to ascertain the cause of such behaviour.

Currently anyone involved in violent crimes in and around licensed premises are presumed and perceived to be under the influence of alcohol. While this may be correct in some cases and is often confirmed by a breath analyses by Police, there is no way to know if the violent offender was under the influence of any illicit substances. With the current data suggesting 20% of people attending late night entertainment precincts have consumed illicit substances, by not mandating drug tests, it is unknown what percentage of illicit drug users then go on to commit violent acts in and around licensed premises.

Although drug testing violent offenders will be costly, the AHA (NT) believes that it must be an action that should be undertaken by the NT Government and NT Police in order to ascertain the exact prevalence of the NT's 'Ice' problem.

### Further Consultation

The AHA (NT) is of the view that the development and implementation of further initiatives to directly address the supply and the use of illicit drugs, including 'Ice', requires a whole of community approach, including liquor licensees.



However, it would be unreasonable for the NT Government to assign more responsibilities or obligations to liquor licensees in respect to illicit drugs, beyond the current liquor and criminal legislative requirements.

The AHA (NT) is happy to participate in further consultation with the Select Committee on this matter and distribute relevant information to our members, through our communications and Liquor Accords on this matter and outcomes of the Inquiry.

If you have any queries, please contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Des Crowe  
Chief Executive Officer