



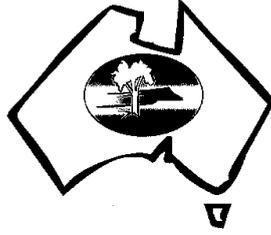
SELECT COMMITTEE ON SUBSTANCE ABUSE
IN THE COMMUNITY

SUBMISSION NUMBER 0013

DATE: 20 May 2002

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Alice Springs Town Council

Alcohol Issues Council's Role and Position

Adopted by the Alice Springs Town Council
October 2000

Alice Springs Town Council's Role

Alice Springs Town Council agrees to work within its powers, resources, legislation and responsibilities to reduce alcohol-related harms in Alice Springs. We will take a leadership role in resolving alcohol issues in Alice Springs by encouraging and supporting concerned community groups and organisations to participate.

In line with the agreed role of Alice Springs Town Council, the Council will consult with peak bodies to receive their input on alcohol issues and establish a list of priorities for action. These outcomes will be passed on for funding and action to the Northern Territory Government and the Licensing Commission.

Enforcement of Current Legislation

The current Review of the Northern Territory Liquor Act provides a timely opportunity to strengthen the provisions of the Act that deal with "*harm minimisation, including the encouragement of effective industry self regulation and responsible attitudes and practices towards the promotion, sale, supply and consumption of liquor.*"

(Consultation Paper: National Competition Policy Review Northern Territory Liquor Act, P 32)

Council is concerned that there is a commonly held view in the community that the Act and supporting legislation is not being enforced adequately and that the regulatory regime is not effective.

On the other hand regulators and industry representatives might well argue that the current legislative framework does not provide adequately for enforcement and that this in turn is impacting negatively on attempts to self regulate.

Some questions that need answering are:

Does the Commission have sufficient mandate to enforce the Act?

Is the Commission adequately resourced in Alice Springs?

Should an indigenous person from Central Australia be appointed to the Commission in Alice Springs?

Council believes that a better-resourced Licensing Commission in Alice Springs with Indigenous representation is required.

There should be greater support for the role of law enforcement agencies and incentives for those licensees who enforce the Act and promote responsible drinking practices.

Council supports a crack down on grog runners and increased penalties for those caught participating in such illegal activity.

Council will:

- Lobby the NT Government for a better-resourced Licensing Commission in Alice Springs.
- Call on the Licensing Commission to ensure that breaches of the Liquor Act are adequately publicised.
- Promote best practice licensees who enforce the Act.
- Support police and other law enforcement agencies wherever possible in their efforts to enforce the Liquor Act.
- Work with the Licensing Commission to increase community awareness of the content and provisions of the Liquor Act.

Public Awareness

Council supports the need for a broadly based public awareness campaign to promote a culture of responsible drinking, the protection of minors, good health and appropriate behaviour in public places.

Council will seek funding to produce advertising to promote responsible drinking throughout Central Australia.

Funding for such a strategy should be sought from the liquor industry and Government departments with primary responsibility for promoting health and well being in our community.

A multi -media approach will target a variety of audiences.

On Youth/Underage Drinking Council will:

- Lobby for funding for provision of a youth sobering up shelter.
- Lobby for legislative change to enable compulsory education programs for youth offenders.
- Target parental responsibility through public education.
- Support increased policing of licensed venues and drinking spots by relevant authorities.
- Support heavy fines for procurement of alcohol for, and sales to, underage drinkers.

To ensure a culture of responsible drinking Council will:

- Work collaboratively to introduce alcohol education programs for the community.
- Support development of education and advertising programs directed to outlying communities.
- Provide information about statistics and economic effects of alcohol abuse.
- Promote the use of local languages in responsible drinking messages.
- Support communities in efforts to provide education about responsible drinking.

Funding

The Council commends community organisations like DASA and CAAAPU, the medical staff at the Alice Springs Hospital and the Wardens and Night Patrol Programs who are at the cutting edge of treatment and intervention programs for people suffering from alcohol related harms.

Funding for education, treatment and intervention programs must be increased to ensure that current and new programs are appropriately resourced.

Council believes that some of this funding should be sourced from the liquor industry.

Council also sees the introduction of measures such as a locally based container deposit system as adding to the funds available for education, intervention, treatment programs and litter control.

On education and treatment Council will:

- Lobby the NT Government for a program similar to successful Living With Alcohol programs.
- Support efforts to make low alcohol beer cheaper.
- Seek the introduction of container deposit programs and have funding returned to education and other alcohol programs – promote those who participate as good corporate citizens.
- Encourage licensees to contribute to rehabilitation programs.
- Seek funds from major corporate suppliers of alcohol for education and rehabilitation programs.
- Work with governments and Aboriginal people for appropriate accommodation options for people from bush communities.
- Acknowledge the existence of a hard core of habitual drinkers and support harm minimisation strategies for them.

Restrictions

The regulation of alcohol availability is largely in the hands of the Licensing Commission. The Licensing Commission may itself place conditions on licenses to encourage responsible trading.

Council does not support the introduction of alcohol free days.

Council does support limiting the size of wine casks and the need to promote light alcohol products.

Some targeted strategies for limiting availability of particular forms of alcohol, at given times, may form part of a broader responsible alcohol strategy.

Council believes that the control of alcohol availability that ensures a culture of responsible drinking is the responsibility of the Licensing Commission, the liquor industry and licensees. Best practice strategies that have been adopted by the industry elsewhere in Australia and overseas should be investigated and implemented locally.

Council is concerned at the reported levels of youth drinking. Current regulatory measures need to be tightened and a public education program on both youth and parental responsibilities needs to be instigated.

On restrictions Council will:

- Support the restriction of wine casks to 2 litres.
- Consider other restrictions relating to the sale of alcohol products.
- Not support the introduction of alcohol free days.
- Support the enforcement of a proof of age system through mandatory photo cards.
- Support the card being revocable.

Anti-Social Behaviour

Council acknowledges that business, community and tourists continue to be concerned about the high levels of anti-social behaviour exhibited in certain areas across the town and in particular in the central business area.

Council also acknowledges the improvements that have been made since the police increased their presence in the Mall and surrounds.

Alcohol is inextricably linked to anti-social behaviour in our town.

A whole of Government and community approach is needed to put in place preventative strategies to discourage anti-social behaviour and enforcement strategies to deal quickly with public misdemeanours.

To this end Council will, along with the relevant NT Government agencies look at improving safety through lighting, surveillance, and on spot fines, etc.

We need to work with educators and build relationships with other community leaders to send out a clear message to all who use town facilities. We need to make a stance as a community on the behaviour we expect in our town.

Council will continue to work closely with the police and the Tangentyere Wardens to make Alice a safer place for all.

On anti-social behaviour Council will;

- Support more enforcement of legislation relating to anti-social behaviour.
- Lobby the Licensing Commission to increase licensees' discretionary powers to refuse service.
- Seek funding for investigating more effective lighting and the possible introduction of surveillance cameras in appropriate areas.
- Seek legislative support for on the spot fines for anti-social offences.
- Lobby for more funding for earlier interventions, e.g. 24 hour night/day patrol and wardens.
- Take a strong stance on behalf of the community on the behaviour we expect in our town.
- Encourage the promotion of appropriate behaviour in public.
- Develop a strong appeal to businesses and agencies to sponsor Aboriginal youth sport and cultural activities.



Alice Springs Town Council

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MEDIA RELEASE

20.9.00

COUNCIL DEVELOPS STRATEGIES ON ALCOHOL ISSUES

The Alice Springs Town Council has identified five key strategies that it would like to see implemented to address alcohol issues in Central Australia. The Council will work with other agencies and the community to ensure that the strategies are developed and carried through.

The key areas are enforcement of current legislation, public awareness, funding, restrictions and anti-social behaviour.

In enforcement of current legislation, the council believes that a better-resourced Licensing Commission in Alice Springs with Indigenous representation is required. This follows from the fact that Council, along with the community, is concerned that the Liquor Act is not being enforced adequately. It will lobby the NT Government to make the commission more effective and work with it to increase community awareness of the provisions of the Liquor Act.

In public awareness, Council supports the need for a broadly based public awareness campaign to promote a culture of responsible drinking, the protection of minors, good health and appropriate behaviour in public places.

In particular, the Council is concerned about youth and underage drinking and supports a campaign that targets both parental responsibility and responsible serving practices. It also will promote the use of local languages in responsible drinking messages.

Funding for education, treatment and intervention programs must be increased to ensure that current and new programs are appropriately resourced. Some of this funding should well be sourced from the liquor industry.

The Council is concerned at the reported levels of youth drinking and would like to see the current regulatory measures tightened.

As far as the regulation of alcohol availability goes, it is largely in the hands of the Licensing Commission. Council does support the restriction of wine casks to two litres. Other measures may be required.

The Council believes that the strategies, when applied in full with the support of other stakeholders, should make a significant contribution to lessening the negative impacts of alcohol on our community.

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