



Submission to Legislative Scrutiny Committee:

Liquor Amendment Bill 2026 (Serial 71)

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Introduction

The Local Government Association of the Northern Territory (LGANT) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee on the Liquor Amendment Bill 2026 (Serial 71).

LGANT is the peak body representing local government in the Northern Territory. LGANT's membership comprises all 18 local government councils, including five municipal councils, ten regional councils, three shire councils and one associate member. LGANT provides leadership, support, representation and advocacy on behalf of its member councils for the benefit of their communities.

Local government councils have a direct interest in liquor legislation due to its impact on community safety, public amenity, service delivery and community wellbeing. Councils also possess valuable local knowledge regarding the practical implications of alcohol-related policies and are often responsible for responding to the social and operational impacts experienced within communities.

Recommendations

1. Consultation periods

Future consultation processes would benefit from timeframes that allow representative bodies, such as LGANT, to undertake meaningful engagement with their membership.

2. Alcohol Management Plans (AMPs)

- a. The Northern Territory Government provides greater clarity on the status of existing AMPs, including how they will be considered under the proposed legislative framework, implementation and transitions arrangements, and opportunities for ongoing community and local government input.
- b. LGANT also recommends a formal review of the legislative amendments within 12-24 months to assess the effectiveness, identify unintended consequences and inform future policy improvements.

3. Interim Alcohol Protected Areas (I-APAs) conversion to general restricted areas (GRAs)

The Northern Territory Government should ensure the transition of I-APAs to GRAs is supported by genuine community engagement, clear and culturally appropriate information and meaningful opportunities for affected communities and their elected representatives to participate in decision making.

4. Banning notices and extending the prescribed duration from 14 to 90 days

Clarify the exemptions for essential services, supports and daily living needs.

Feedback

LGANT appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on the Liquor Amendment Bill 2026 and supports the intent of the Bill to reduce alcohol-related harm and improve community safety across the Northern Territory. While supportive of overall objectives of the Bill, LGANT would like to provide feedback on several key amendments and aspects of the consultation process.

LGANT's comments relate to:

- the limited consultation timeframe provided for the Bill;
- Alcohol management plans;
- the proposed transition of Interim Alcohol Protected Areas (I-APAs) to General Restricted Areas (GRAs); and

- the proposed extension of banning notices from 14 days to 90 days.

These issues are relevant to local government, given councils' role in supporting community wellbeing, delivering services and facilities, and responding to the practical impacts of alcohol-related policies in municipal, regional and remote communities.

Consultation Periods

LGANT notes that the consultation period provided for these amendments was extremely limited, with less than one week available for stakeholders to review the proposed changes and prepare submissions. Given the significance of several amendments, LGANT would have welcomed the opportunity to undertake broader consultation with member councils. Local governments possess extensive place-based knowledge and practical experience regarding the operation of alcohol-related measures within their communities, particularly in regional and remote areas. Due to the short timeframe provided, LGANT's ability to seek comprehensive feedback from its membership and fully reflect local government perspectives has been constrained.

Providing a longer consultation period would enable local governments to meaningfully engage in the process. This would help ensure that local knowledge, community perspectives and the practical implications of proposed reforms are fully considered during policy development.

Alcohol Management Plans

Local government councils have expressed concerns regarding the future status of Alcohol Management Plans (AMPs) and the relationship between existing plans and the proposed legislative framework. Communities across the Northern Territory have invested significant time and resources into developing AMPs and should be provided with greater clarity regarding the progress, approval status and ongoing role of those plans.

Clear information is needed on how existing Alcohol Management Plans will be considered under the proposed amendments, the associated implementation and transition arrangements, and opportunities for ongoing community input. LGANT recognises that legislative restrictions are one mechanism for harm reduction measures. However, experience across the Territory demonstrates that long-term success relies on transparent implementation, meaningful consultation and strong local leadership, alongside sustained investment in prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, youth engagement and community support services.

As key community stakeholders, local governments have a strong interest in understanding how AMPs and the new community alcohol plan provisions will interact in practice, particularly where these processes may influence alcohol restrictions and community safety outcomes. LGANT encourages the NTG to maintain transparent communication with Local Authorities, Traditional Owners, local government elected members and Existing Liquor Accords throughout implementation to ensure locally informed decision-making and community confidence in the reform process.

Conversion of interim alcohol protected areas (I-APAs) to general restricted areas (GRAs)

LGANT acknowledges that the proposed conversion of Interim Alcohol Protected Areas (I-APAs) to General Restricted Areas (GRAs) is intended to provide legislative clarity while maintaining protection against alcohol-related harm. LGANT supports measures that assist communities to reduce alcohol-related harm and improve community safety. LGANT notes that these amendments will affect a significant number of Aboriginal communities across the Northern Territory and represents a substantial change to the legislative framework governing alcohol restrictions. In this context, LGANT is concerned that the pace and nature of the proposed reforms appear inconsistent with the Northern Territory Government's broader policy focus on Empowering the Bush, strengthening local leadership and supporting local decision-making.

Many Northern Territory regional local government councils are Aboriginal led, governed by elected members who live in and represent the communities affected by these changes. These elected members play an important role in advocating for their communities and should be empowered to participate in decisions that directly affect local governance, community wellbeing and alcohol management arrangements. LGANT considers that significant reforms of this nature should be supported by genuine community engagement, clear and culturally appropriate information, and opportunities for communities and their elected representatives to help shape decisions that affect them.

Banning notices extension

The proposed increase in the maximum duration of a banning notice from 14 days to 90 days represents a significant change that warrants further consideration. The practical impacts of an extended banning period on individuals, communities and service providers are not clearly addressed in the Bill. The proposed exemptions allow access for employment, healthcare and government services, however, it remains unclear whether this extends to local government services and facilities such as, libraries, community centres, recreational facilities, safe houses and other council-operated services. This uncertainty is particularly relevant for young people aged 12 to 17 years, who may be subject to a banning notice under the Act. Councils across the Northern Territory deliver a range of youth-focused programs and activities, including sport and recreation programs, school holiday activities, community events and programs such as the Fun Bus, which are intended to support wellbeing, social connection and positive engagement. It is unclear if these activities are affected by an extended banning notice.

Similarly, there appears to be no explicit provision for access to food, groceries or other necessities of daily living. These matters are particularly relevant in regional and remote communities where essential services are often concentrated within a single township, and alternative options may be limited or unavailable.

From a local government perspective, councils are often responsible for delivering, facilitating or supporting the services that assist vulnerable community members, including operating community facilities, safe places, outreach programs and other wellbeing initiatives. LGANT is concerned that extended banning periods may have unintended consequences for people experiencing homelessness or other forms of disadvantage by reducing access to support networks, services and essential goods. While banning notices may remove a person from a particular location, they do not necessarily address the underlying factors contributing to harmful behaviour and may instead result in the displacement of vulnerable individuals to other locations or communities that are equally, or less, equipped to provide appropriate support.

Greater clarity regarding the operation and impacts of extended banning notices would assist communities, service providers and local governments to understand the practical implications of these changes.

Conclusion

LGANT appreciates the opportunity to contribute to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee's review of the Liquor Amendment Bill 2026 and welcomes the Northern Territory Government's focus on reducing alcohol-related harms in the Northern Territory

LGANT supports the intent of the Liquor Amendment Bill 2026 to reduce alcohol-related harm and improve community safety across the Northern Territory. The issues raised in this submission are intended to strengthen the proposed reforms by ensuring they are informed by local knowledge, responsive to the realities of regional and remote communities and supported by meaningful engagement with affected stakeholders. LGANT looks forward to continuing to work with the

Northern Territory Government on initiatives that improve community wellbeing while supporting place-based decision-making and practical outcomes for Territory communities.