

31 July 2026

Committee Secretariat
Legislative Scrutiny Committee
Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory
GPO Box 3721
Darwin NT 0801

Via email: LSC@nt.gov.au

Dear Secretary,

RE: LIQUOR AMENDMENT BILL 2026 INQUIRY

Thank you for your letter dated 27 July 2026 advising of the Legislative Scrutiny Committee's inquiry into the *Liquor Amendment Bill 2026* and invitation for input by 31 July 2026.

I am pleased to provide the following response from Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory (AMSANT), the peak body for Aboriginal community controlled health services (ACCHSs) in the NT.

1. We welcome the proposed amendments to the *Liquor Act 2019* that address the impending expiration of current Interim Alcohol Restricted Area (IAPA) protections by converting IAPAs to General Restricted Areas (GRAs).

We have been a strong advocate for such restrictions, knowing that were they allowed to lapse we would inevitably see a wave of alcohol-related harms which would be disproportionately borne by Aboriginal women and children, such as we saw when the earlier *Stronger Futures* protections were allowed to expire in July 2022.

However, we note that a community may vary its GRA (under which all alcohol is initially banned) to either remove the ban or to amend it such that alcohol is allowed under some conditions. For those communities that wish to do so, this will require a process to develop a Community Alcohol Plan. While we realise that this is not a legislative matter, we believe that the process for developing such a Plan must be well enough resourced to ensure that all community members are able to have a say and that any agreed plan must be able to ensure community safety in a sustainable way.

2. However, we are deeply concerned about the proposal to extend the maximum length of a police-issued banning notice from 14 days to 90 days (Clause 25).

We understand that under the *Liquor Act 2019*, a police officer may issue a banning notice if they

reasonably believe the person has committed, or is committing, a listed banning offence in a high-risk area, is likely to continue offending, and the notice is necessary to prevent alcohol-related violence or further offending in that area.

We note that a banning notice does not prevent a person from entering or remaining in a high-risk area to attend work or a health care facility, to receive medical treatment or to access a government service.

However, AMSANT is concerned that these banning notices restrict a person's ability to access other essential services including supermarkets, banking services, education facilities and other community services. It may also prevent Aboriginal people from accessing Country and traditional lands, which are themselves fundamental determinants of health.

In practice, individuals may breach a banning notice simply by attempting to purchase food, access essential social and community services or meet the needs of their family. This increases the likelihood of further law enforcement action arising from behaviours associated with meeting basic health needs. Such an approach risks perpetuating cycles of criminalisation that disproportionately impact Aboriginal people.

AMSANT is not aware of any evidence demonstrating that extending banning notices from 14 to 90 days will improve community safety or reduce alcohol-related harm. Without a clear evidence base, the proposed amendment risks undermining the harm minimisation objectives of the *Liquor Act 2019* while increasing the likelihood of unintended adverse impacts on Aboriginal people and communities.

AMSANT therefore strongly recommends that the proposed extension of police-issued banning notices from 14 to 90 days should not proceed.

AMSANT appreciates the opportunity to provide input and welcomes any opportunity for further engagement on this matter. If you require more information in relation to the content of this letter, please contact me on (08) 8944 6666 or by emailing submissions@amsant.org.au.

Yours sincerely,

A black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Donna Ah Chee.

Donna Ah Chee
Chief Executive Officer
AMSANT