



2 March 2020

Committee Secretary  
GPO Box 3721  
DARWIN NT 0801

Email: [LSC@nt.gov.au](mailto:LSC@nt.gov.au)

**RE: Liquor Amendment Bill 2020**

I am writing today to strongly oppose the introduction of the Liquor Amendment Bill 2020.

In addition to our opposition, we would like to endorse and point to in particular the submissions of Danila Dilba and the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE).

**About the Northern Territory Council of Social Services**

NTCOSS is a peak body for the social and community services sector in the Northern Territory (NT) and an advocate for social justice on behalf of people and communities across the region who may be affected by poverty and disadvantage.

NTCOSS' vision is for a fair, inclusive and sustainable NT where all individuals and communities can participate in and benefit from all aspects of social, cultural and economic life.

NTCOSS' mission is to promote an awareness and understanding of social issues through the NT community and to strive towards the development of an equitable and just society.

NTCOSS has a broad membership base, made up of non-government and community organisations, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and community councils, as well as other organisations and individuals committed to social justice issues for people and communities who are socially and financially disadvantaged in the NT.

**Community group opposition**

The Northern Territory Council of Social Services (NTCOSS), along with a group of community and research organisations and individuals, oppose the development of a Dan Murphy's in Darwin.

A Dan Murphy's will engage in aggressive individualised marketing and discounted product campaigns that will increase the availability of alcohol products.

The development of a Dan Murphy's will result in greater availability and volume of alcohol, which will directly result in greater harm.

### **Alcohol reforms – stay the course**

The Riley Review and the subsequent introduction of an independent liquor commission, moratorium on new licences, banned drinker register and a minimum unit price have been critical policy steps towards reducing harm by alcohol in the NT.

In the first full year of the operation of the alcohol reforms (October 2018 – September 2019):

- There has been a reduction of over 1,000 alcohol-related assaults across the Northern Territory (down 25% from 4,098 to 3,074).<sup>1</sup>
- There has been a reduction of 550 domestic violence assaults where alcohol was involved (down 21% from 2,644 to 2,094).<sup>2</sup>
- There have been large falls in the number of alcohol-related emergency department presentations for partial year data (down 31% across the Northern Territory).<sup>3</sup>

These outcomes are a direct result of the reforms. A new Dan Murphy's will result in increased volume of sales and this will jeopardise these positive gains.

### **Removal of the 'like for like' substitution – opening the door to vastly increase volumes of alcohol**

The consequences of removing the like-for-like substitution do not begin and end at the potential development of a Dan Murphy's in Darwin.

Like-for-like substitution has served as a way to keep the volume of alcohol entering the Territory through liquor stores similar to the volume currently being experienced. It is a key legislative protection to sales volumes being increased.

The removal of like-for-like substitution means a licensed liquor trader can, with any licence they own, potentially create a much, much larger store (subject to greenfield status).

As a result of the proposed amendments, liquor merchants operating in Darwin are likely to follow Dan Murphy's lead if they are successful in the appeals process.

---

<sup>1</sup> NT Police Crime Statistics: <https://pfes.nt.gov.au/police/community-safety/nt-crime-statistics>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> NT Department of Health: <https://alcoholreform.nt.gov.au/data-and-evaluation/graph>

One big box liquor outlet will be harmful to the NT. More than one has the potential to cause even greater harm across the NT.

**Taking a longer-term view**

This legislation has the potential to make changes that vastly increase the availability and volume of sales far past the creation of a Dan Murphy's in Darwin. The NT does not need bigger liquor outlets with more sophisticated marketing ability and discounted products. These proposed amendments will undermine the positive outcomes we have seen to date and we encourage the Government to stay the course and embed the existing reforms.

We oppose the legislative reform and the removal of the like-for-like substitution due to the harmful social consequences it will lead to in the Territory.

Yours sincerely,

Deborah Di Natale  
CEO, NTCOSS