



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY
13th Assembly

Petition

Registration No.	31
Title	Don't let the NT Government call last drinks on family businesses
Presented on	29 November 2018
Presented by	Member for Spillett (Finocchiaro)
Referred to	Attorney-General and Minister for Justice (Hon Natasha Fyles MLA) and to the Social Policy Scrutiny Committee for consideration to debate
Assembly debate	If the Committee recommends the Petition be debated it will appear on the Notice Paper
Date referred	29 November 2018
Response due	9 May 2019
Response received	20 December 2018
Response to be presented	12 February 2019

Petition

In one of the most brazen attacks on family-run small businesses in the NT, the government is trying to further restrict the sale of alcohol.

Proposed new laws would slash the already tight limits on how much alcohol small businesses can sell, restricting hard working families' ability to service their communities.

NT small businesses have been under pressure for a long time, and these proposed changes will just make it tougher, putting the livelihoods of hard working Territorians at risk.

If these laws go ahead, not only will local shops suffer, their communities will have less access to food and everyday essentials.

DON'T LET THE N. T. GOVERNMENT CALL LAST DRINKS ON FAMILY BUSINESSES!

If you think the government is going too far trying to stop family businesses serve their communities, we urge you to support our cause and sign this petition.

Thank you for your support

Response

The Petition was lodged by Retail Drinks Australia (formerly the Australian Liquor Stores Association) on behalf of the Northern Territory's small licensed stores, and has called for support to protect these small businesses from what they perceive to be unfair trading rules. The

Petition states that the new restrictions placed on alcohol sales will make it difficult for these businesses to survive and will adversely affect the community, who will have less access to the goods and services the small stores provide.

The Alcohol Policies and Legislation Review Final Report (the Report) was released last year, and made the following recommendations concerning licensed grocery stores:

- takeaway liquor only permitted to be sold from stand-alone business, in which the primary focus of the business is the sale of alcohol;
- store licences transitioning to stand-alone takeaway licences be subject to a condition restricting liquor sales to 15% of gross annual sales of the business, and a seven year sunset period, in which time the licence obtains a takeaway licence and the transitional licence will cease to operate; and
- external advertising of alcohol is prohibited.

Government initially accepted these recommendations in-principle, and has regularly engaged with all key stakeholders, including the then Liquor Stores Association of the Northern Territory, Hospitality NT and the Master Grocers Association, to discuss the recommendations affecting licensed grocery stores.

As a result of these consultations, it was found there were potential unintended consequences with these recommendations, as licensed grocery stores had the potential to transition to stand-alone takeaway outlets and focus solely on alcohol. This was not the intent of the recommendations.

Consequently, the Expert Advisory Panel responsible for the Report amended its recommendations as follows:

- abandon the recommendation regarding the transition of licensed stores to stand-alone takeaway licences;
- alcohol sales still be restricted to 15 per cent of annual gross sales;
- annual risk-based licensing fees be applied to licensed stores;
- physical separation of groceries from alcohol remain in place;
- external advertising be banned; and
- existing grocery store licences should not be transferable, cannot be sold, and are effectively grandfathered.

Government gave the Expert Advisory Panel's amended recommendations careful consideration and determined existing licensed grocery stores should continue to trade under the following conditions:

- liquor sales set at 25 per cent of total gross annual sales;
- instead of stand-alone separation, consideration will be given to other forms of visual or physical separation, and separate point of sale facilities are not required;
- external branding advertising (e. g. Bottlemart, Thirsty Camel and Cellarbrations) for alcohol will be allowed, but no product advertising; and
- an annual risk-based licensing fee will be introduced.

Government's position on licensed grocery stores represents a substantial change from what was proposed in both the Expert Advisory Panel's original and amended recommendations. It

allows licensed stores to continue running and protects the owner's investment by allowing them to sell their stores, should they choose to do so. Restrictions on total gross annual alcohol sales have been lifted from 15 per cent to 25 per cent. The Alcohol Review Implementation Team (ARIT) have advised that the majority of the small store owners do not have any issue with this. It should be remembered that liquor licence conditions only ever allowed for alcohol sales to be an ancillary part of their business. The new Liquor Act is expected to come into effect in late 2019. Licensed stores will be allowed a one year transitional period before complying with the new requirements.

Government will continue to engage with industry and the broader community to monitor the reduction of alcohol-related harm through the implementation of these reforms. Further consultation with grocery stores will be undertaken, in regards to the proposed conditions, in the next few months.