
Stamen Investments PTY LTD trading as
Rum Jungle Tavern



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Alcohol Policies and Legislation Review
Part of Health Department
Email

Dear Review Panel

The Rum Jungle Tavern is situated in Batchelor and caters for both locals and tourists. Our Tavern is the hub of the town and the McElwee family have been operating the premises since we renovated the closed Rum Jungle Recreation Club in 2006. We have one main bar, a beer garden, a gaming room and a function room. We have a Gold Plate winning bistro, offer takeaway and gaming and employ about 14 staff during the main season.

Our family had previously run the Timber Creek Wayside Inn and Timber Creek store as well as operating a café in Darwin.

Overheads are relatively high in Batchelor with wages and electricity costs being difficult to contain. We have recently installed solar panels at the cost of approximately \$200,000 to reduce some of these costs.

We feel strongly about the threat of more liquor taxes. We use to pay this to the NT Government and a while ago this got rolled into the GST. We pay GST on all our alcohol sales whether they be takeaway or across our counter. We pay a lot more GST for liquor sold for drinking at our premise than we do for the same amount of alcohol sold as takeaway. We should not have to pay any more taxes after the GST on alcohol. We have recently been told that gaming taxation is going to dramatically increase. All these taxes add up and our income is not increasing. Give us a break. You can come to Batchelor and look at my books to see our operation makes little profit and we don't get a great return on our investment in Batchelor.

Last year we made additional renovations including the toilet block which many tourists use without purchasing anything from us. We also reinvested monies into staff training, security and other patron care measures.

Batchelor is a unique community and we have worked very hard to ensure our Tavern is part of the local community with our annual kids Xmas party and various charity fundraising events.

Before we got our licence we had to go through quite a few different public hearings with the Licensing Commission to be able to get the licence. Where possible we dealt with community concerns expressed during those hearings.

Whilst we don't have an accord as such we do work closely with the NT Police to make sure we have a good community tavern. The Police visit the tavern regularly with our approval and we also have set meetings with them to discuss events like the rodeo.

The licence application process was fair and we had a panel of members we needed to provide submissions to. The panel were interested in our application and asked many questions during the panel's view of the proposed licensed premises. We needed to provide full information on planning and proposed building works. The public hearings in Batchelor gave the locals an opportunity to deal with the issues and the impact our proposed licence would have on them. Whilst the NT Police had objected to the licence the local Batchelor Police were not similarly opposed to the application. The opportunity to test the Police evidence by the Panel and to make common sense decisions meant that the application was approved. If the application was made under the current system the Police objection may not have been properly tested. The common sense approach also meant that the panel could indicate that they in principle supported the application but needed to focus on what conditions

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needed to be imposed. Out track record in Timber Creek and our previous close working relationship with local police assisted our cause.

Common sense is the biggest ingredient to our service policies. We do have a high turnover of staff as we are unable to recruit locals to work long term and rely on other Australians and occasional backpackers. These workers are instructed on RSA and we emphasise them to ensure the peace is kept, that drunks are not tolerated and to ensure children are properly accompanied and supervised.

We enforce a patron code of behaviour. For instance, we do not tolerate arguments or shouting matches in our pub as it effects all our patrons. We do ban patrons that play up. Having lived in the NT for over forty years I can say that patron behaviour has improved on licensed premises. Living in a small community also makes the local patrons more accountable to the community.

We appreciate being granted a liquor licence and know that we need to maintain standards to keep it. It is our livelihood and accordingly we do not want to risk our business by not complying with our licence conditions or liquor laws. So we try hard to comply and make sure management and all staff know what they need to do.

Given the high costs of operations we do not discount on premise to the extent you might see in Mitchell Street. We belong to a retail buying group which looks after our bottleshop promotions.

Some mention has been made of ensuring there is no discrimination when serving customers, particularly indigenous customers. Certainly a guideline which spells out what staff can and can't do and say and when patrons can be refused would be a handy tool we could put into our staff induction training as well as running some education campaign with the indigenous patrons who are likely to be asking for service.

We work closely with Litchfield Motel which we also have ownership of. Between our tavern and the motel we can work closely with the community and the NT Police to keep our licensed premises delivering a range of services to the community.

In Batchelor we feel quite forgotten by the Darwin based policy makers as our trade continues to drop and there are less opportunities in Batchelor now than before. We have the added burden of rising wages and other costs and taxes and we do not need any more Darwin based interference in our business.

Really with all the red tape and increase taxes you got to wonder whether anybody wants us to be in business at all and whether they want to see any economic development in Batchelor.

We did get some assistance for renovating the toilet area which we also contributed a lot to. However, we want to be more than a toilet stop in a national park. If tourism does increase we are in a position to grow with it provided we are not taxed out of existence.

Thanks for reading this

Janet McElwee
Nominee