



The Tap on Mitchell Submission – Alcohol Review

My name is Aneeta Clark and I am the Nominee for the 'Tap on Mitchell' liquor licence, located on Mitchell St in the Darwin CBD.

I would like to put forward the following points for the Alcohol Panel to consider:

In general our industry is in decline, and besides this more venues have been granted licenses in our precinct making earning a profit even more difficult in this current economic climate. Slapping us with an extra fee to open our doors by way of annual liquor licensing fees will not help to keep anyone's doors open – we just saw Viva La Vida close and I'm sure they won't be the last. We at The Tap on Mitchell have decided to be proactive about attaining alternative revenue streams to remain afloat and have just earned ourselves a hefty debt to finance the construction of a gaming room as a result of this. Which I might add has since attracted a big tax increase to boot! There's just not a big pool of cash available to raid in our circumstances.

People want to socialise, drink alcohol, be entertained – for a range of reasons including celebrating birthdays and various rites of passage, to unwinding after a stressful work life. It's a part of our Australian culture. Especially up here in Darwin, drinking is a massive part of life for a lot of people. If you close the doors of venues earlier, I believe it would be detrimental to the community.

We as a licensed venue can provide managed, controlled environments for these activities to unfold, and without us then you're laying the responsibility of controlling these environments back on the police out in the community at house parties and amateur unlicensed events... real harm can occur at these types of events.

In licensed venues we provide alcohol portion controlled drinks, staff to monitor sobriety levels and responsibly serve drinks - or in fact refuse to serve drinks if necessary or offer water, sober security and staff to offer assistance or aid should anything untoward happen, do our best to maintain a controlled and safe environment, have transport home more readily available at our doorsteps, provide entertainment that is safe and sociable, and this all in precincts or venues that don't disturb suburbia or sleeping neighbours!

Then we must look at what culling the work industries hours would do to staffing levels and employment opportunities for our population. Some people need to work night shifts to earn a living that fits in with their routines, so shutting venues' doors early would eat into the hours they would be able to work and inevitably their pay packets. Besides this, as I said above, it's becoming increasingly difficult to stay in the black as far as profit goes so shortening the hours also decreases our chances of making the revenue we need to maintain a profit at the end of the day.

As I've mentioned above, with the increase in licensed premises in our area (Darwin CBD) the shrinking pie of profitability has now also had to be cut into smaller pieces, and will inevitably result in heartbreak and closed doors for some business owners. It would be wise of those in a position to grant liquor licences to collect intel and data about the trends - population status, industry performance, health of neighbouring businesses, and other such information before granting licenses for competition venues to open up in my opinion. Otherwise you stand to risk being instrumental in causing the failure of either established or new businesses in the industry, which affects more people than the owners and operators, it affects staff, suppliers and contractors.

I would like to go on record to state that City safe is an excellent program and money well spent on keeping our nightlife atmosphere in good shape! Police presence makes honest people feel safe and the scoundrels deterred from misbehaving – well this is a very general statement but is at least true to some extent! Keeping a watchful eye on the streets outside our jurisdictions helps to provide safe transitioning from venue to venue (known as the “Mitchell Street Migration” by some locals about town) and homebound when the time calls. There tends to be some fairly prejudiced opinions out there about the crowd controllers that result in a lack of respect from some unruly patrons, and back-up by police to venues and their staff is never a bad thing to have on hand!

We have had some awful incidents cause grievances here at The Tap on Mitchell over the last year and beyond. Quite often in the day time! To mention some – we’ve had staff spat at, ashtrays and furniture flung at staff, punches thrown (and even connected) at staff. Patrons are regularly humbugged. I’ve seen cruise ship passengers be called “white c#%ts” because they won’t fork out a few bucks for a beggar, and American tourists lose their lunch to someone reaching over the fence line and swiping a handful of it from their plate. These acts have seriously detrimental effects on our tourism!

Day time public intoxication has been a serious issue for our venue. Let me describe the worst 2 cases I’ve witnessed in the last six months. The first involved a couple of 20-year-old (or so) females enjoying a cocktail by our fence-line watching the world go by, when after refusing to produce cash for a beggar had an A-frame hurled over the fence at them!! This resulted in one of them having her hand cut open when she raised it to defend herself from the flying object. The other was when a male parked up with his wine bladder on the footpath against the fence line of our venue by a lunch table of 20 guests with young children, and when nature called for him to urinate – he exposed himself in their view and did his business on the footpath! All of these incidents I have listed here were the actions of people I believe showed clear signs of intoxication, drunken disorderliness and blatant disregard for the law or respect for anyone else. I’m not sure what the solution is, but providing cheap alcohol at takeaway liquor outlets cannot help!

Accords are great – if everyone agrees to and participates in their clauses and the making of them! In my opinion accords are a fantastic platform for sounding out and experimenting with guidelines for good practices! It’s great for the industry to be involved in self-governing, and gives everyone a chance to work together both as a unified industry group, as well as with politicians and authorities in implementing practical and useful laws going forward. But at the end of the day, if we as an industry don’t at some point gain the support of authorities in ensuring that some of these guidelines - that have been collectively agreed upon as being needed to maintain a just and safe playing field – don’t become law, then it all falls to ruins and becomes a waste of time and effort if some venues at some point choose not to participate.

RSA certificates are available in all states, with laws that slightly vary between them. Some in-house policies might be instrumental in training staff about how things are different in the NT. But with the high turnover of staff we experience here in the Territory, it is likely that some of this would be overlooked. It wouldn’t be a bad thing to tailor an RSA course specific to the NT.

Thank you for your consideration.

Aneeta Clark
Manger