CLEARER GUIDELINES FOR TAKEAWAY LIQUOR LICENCES

Racing, Gaming and Licensing Minister Syd Stirling and the Acting Chair of the Licensing Commission John Flynn have had constructive discussions this morning about the issuing of takeaway liquor licences in the future.

Mr Stirling said the Division of Racing, Gaming and Licensing would work with the Commission as a matter of urgency to develop stronger guidelines for the issuing of new licences, with greater consideration given to their impact on anti-social behaviour.

“I have asked RGL and the Commission to particularly look at how the ‘needs and wishes’ of the community can be given greater recognition in Commission hearings,” Mr Stirling said.

“I expressed concern to the Acting Commissioner that, in my view, the ‘needs’ of the community were not adequately taken into account during the recent Woolworths liquor licence hearing.

In its decision, the Commission says that it was ‘not easy’ to assess the needs of the public, stating: ‘The Commission would have appreciated having evidence and research tendered that clearly addressed such issues as the impact of a ‘controlled’ takeaway liquor outlet on wider community health and social issues.’

“There are volumes of Territory-specific information pointing to the link between the availability of alcohol and levels of anti-social behaviour. This should not be ignored by the Commission.

“It is extremely hard to argue that the community needs another takeaway liquor licence in the Darwin CBD. This is the sort of issue I would like the Commission to pay closer attention to when they consider new liquor licences.

“In addition, I want the Commission and RGL to investigate whether the Director of Licensing can play a bigger role in the licence application process. For example, the Director could gather information related to the ‘needs and wishes’ of the community to present to the Commission.

“There is no doubt that grog and anti-social behaviour go hand in hand. It is important that we address our licence processes as a matter of urgency as part of wider efforts to reduce anti-social behaviour in our community.

“I am pleased this process is underway.

“In the longer term, Government will completely re-write the Liquor Act in consultation with stakeholders to ensure we have legislation that better reflects the needs of our community.”

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