Supermarkets Opt for Suspension of Liquor Licences

The Alcohol Policy Minister Chris Burns has welcomed a Liquor Commission decision allowing two Darwin suburban supermarkets to voluntarily suspend their liquor licences.

The voluntary suspensions follow recent amendments to the Liquor Act that prevent supermarkets from operating both a book-up service and a takeaway liquor licence at the same time.

Dr Burns said the licensee of Jingili Foodland has voluntarily sought the suspension for five years. The licensee of the Stuart Park Supermarket volunteered to not sell alcohol for four years.

The long-term suspensions are in response to recent amendments to the NT Liquor Act. The amendments restrict premises with takeaway liquor licences from retaining debit or credit cards of customers for the use of “book-up”.

“Both licensees have relinquished their ability to sell takeaway alcohol for the next 4-5 years, preferring instead to retain the practice of book-up,” Dr Burns said.

“The voluntary suspensions ensure the Territory Government continues to support small business while reducing the number of operational takeaway liquor licences in the Territory.”

In 2005-06, the Northern Territory had the highest per capita level of alcohol consumption in the country at 17.3 litres per adult compared with the national average of 10 litres per adult.

Dr Burns said the Northern Territory Government has introduced a raft of measures to combat alcohol abuse including:

- Committing an extra $10.1 million on alcohol and drug initiatives as part of our Closing the Gap initiative
- Implementing a moratorium on new takeaway liquor licences
- Establishing specialist Alcohol Courts, with the power to make sentencing orders, and prohibition orders against offenders dependent on alcohol
- Introduced private and public dry areas legislation – 214 private premises have been declared 'restricted', resulting in better tenancy occupation and less neighbourhood disruption
- Making Alice Springs and Katherine “dry” towns
- Implementing Alcohol Management Plans in communities
- Rewriting the *Liquor Act* to ensure it is relevant and effective
- Restricting the quantity, strength and time alcohol may be sold in some communities

“The licensees’ decision to apply for voluntary suspensions is a welcome move, and will further strengthen the Territory Government’s efforts to tackle alcohol abuse and the resulting anti-social behaviour,” Dr Burns said.

*Media contact: Andrea Adlam 0401 119467*