Commonwealth Alcohol Laws Need Rework

The Territory Licensing Minister Chris Burns has urged the Federal Government to reconsider aspects of its NT National Emergency Response legislation.

Dr Burns has written to the Federal Indigenous Affairs Minister Mal Brough outlining several problems.

“Some aspects of the legislation are confusing and unclear,” he said.

Dr Burns said the new law requires licensees to record and sight the identification of anyone buying more than 1350ml of pure ethanol.

“The peak industry group, the Australian Hotels Association, believes this requirement is unworkable and will be ineffective,” Dr Burns said.

“The calculations required to determine whether a range of alcohol products exceeds 1350ml of pure ethanol can be complex.

“Given the margin for error is high and the maximum fine is $36,000 many in the industry are justifiably concerned.

“There has apparently also been a lack of consultation to find a workable solution.”

Dr Burns said problems also surround drinking by anglers on waterways.

“Legal advice indicates the only way anglers can be absolutely sure they will be able to drink on a waterway that runs through Aboriginal land is to launch a boat outside the prescribed area.

“This is because in some cases, such as the Daly River, the banks and river beds are Aboriginal land and therefore prescribed areas.

“Anglers are then in the impossible situation of not being able to transport their alcohol across the banks to their boat.

“Legal advice also indicates it is illegal for tourists to have a sunset drink at designated areas near Uluru or Ubirr in Kakadu National Park.
“With tourism a key industry for the Northern Territory, it is understandable that tourist operators are worried.

“The Territory Government is committed to curbing harmful drinking levels but ineffective laws will not ensure this happens.

“I would urge the Federal Government to be flexible and consultative and reconsider these aspects of the new legislation.”

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Moving the Territory Ahead