



27.06.17

Chair,
Expert Panel,
NT Alcohol Policies and Legislation Review 2017.

My name is Tony Quatermass and I represent Aurora Resorts and Hotels. We have operated eight liquor licenses in the Northern Territory since 1995 during which time we have never had any breaches to our liquor license. We currently operate four licensed premises.

All licenses held and venue descriptions - 1995 to current:

Heavitree Gap Tavern, Alice Springs – Current

A tavern situated on the south entrance to Alice Springs. Public bar, lounge bar, meals, poker machines and TAB

Heavitree Supermarket, Alice Springs - Past

A supermarket with take away liquor license, takeaway food and post office agency.

Red Centre Resort, Alice Springs – Past

Motel accommodation, coach camping and restaurant.

Red Centre Dreaming, Alice Springs - Past

A nightly aboriginal cultural dinner and show experience seating up to 200 guests. Originally located at Red Centre Resort and later moved to Heavitree Gap Outback Lodge.

Aurora Alice Springs, Alice Springs - Current

Motel accommodation and licensed restaurant.

Shady Glen Caravan Park, Darwin – Past

Caravan park with takeaway liquor license.

Aurora Kakadu, Kakadu National Park – Current

Motel accommodation with restaurant, bar and takeaway alcohol (self-imposed restricted takeaway alcohol).

Kakadu Lodge – Kakadu National Park – Current

Large caravan park and cabin accommodation, with poolside licensed bistro (self-imposed liquor restrictions)

I strongly oppose a liquor license fee. It is already very expensive for us to operate a liquor outlet business in the Northern Territory, particularly in the remote regional areas where we are situated. Besides the costs associated with operating a liquor license in an urban area the following are added costs that remain largely unseen by others not operating in regional and remote areas.

Staff

We employ 110 staff in peak season directly through our four current licensed premises. Due to the remote locations of our licensed premises our costs associated with staff recruitment and retention run very high.

- These extra costs include higher than normal advertising and recruitment costs due to longer advertising periods.
- Higher than average inhouse training costs due to higher staff turnover due to our regional and remote locations.
- Accommodating all staff onsite and meals at some locations. These costs include providing of the accommodation, upkeep of the accommodation. Ongoing costs of power water sewage for staff accommodation. Meals as incentive to make working in a remote or regional area more lucrative for the employee. The payment of relocation costs to entice quality applicants. At least one third of our employees do not pay for accommodation or meals on site as an incentive for them to stay employed at our locations for longer. The remainder pay less than cost of the provision of the accommodation. Again, an unseen cost of operating our licensed premises.

Freight

An unseen cost to operating a licensed premise in a remote location is the freight cost component of everything. There is nothing at any of our locations that does not have a substantial freight component added to the base cost of the item due to our locations. The price able to be charged on these items to our guests does not reflect the actual cost variance between urban and remote /regional areas. This freight/travel cost is also added to the cost of tradespeople and general maintenance items, pool chemicals, cleaning chemicals, mower blades, toilet paper, printer cartridges. Everything has an extra cost due to our location.

Self-Imposed Restricted Takeaway Alcohol

Due to our remote and regional locations, we understand there is a community relationship and obligation in regard to the sale of takeaway alcohol. Due to this we have self-imposed liquor restrictions to reduce alcohol abuse and community harm.

Seasonality

Our businesses are very seasonal. We have a high season peak of 8 weeks in Kakadu National Park in which time we need to scrape together enough funds to see us through the remainder of the year.

Other Items:

Increased Power Water and Trade Waste Disposal

We, along with everyone else have had to absorb costs from substantial increases to power and water services plus the implementation of the trade waste disposal charges.

Advertising

Aurora Resorts and Hotels is proactive in advertising of the Northern Territory. We spend 10's of thousands of dollars annually from our own budget on NT advertising and we feel we pull our weight when it comes to destination promotion and do not solely relying on NT Government promotion and initiatives. We do understand the current NT Government recognises that Tourism is, and will be a future economic driver for the NT, however I see this taking 3-5 years to get traction.

Liquor Accord

I strongly suggest as part of your review that you support the retention of the liquor accords. The accords can deal with a range of problems and concerns including business practices, personal behaviour and general safety in the community.

Liquor License Fees and GST

I strongly oppose the introduction of a Liquor License Fee system. The Liquor License Fee system was abolished with the introduction of GST. The GST on the sale of alcohol is returned directly to the NT Government. We are currently weighted down with costs and regulations associated with operating a licensed premise and the Licensing Fee is yet another step closer to making it impossible to operate and offer a quality product in a business sector that is being touted as a future economic driver.

Re introducing the Liquor License Fee is a double dipping practice that I oppose wholeheartedly.

Yours sincerely



Tony Quatermass
Aurora Resorts and Hotels
Ph 041 781 5705