

The Arch Rival Bar & Grill
11 University Avenue
Palmerston, NT 0830

30th June, 2017

Re: NT Alcohol Polices and Legislation Review

To the Review Panel,

My Name is Jason Hanna and I am the licensee for T.J. Investments (NT) Pty Ltd and operate the 'The Arch Rival Bar & Grill', located at Lot 4536 University Ave, Palmerston.

I have had this licence, trading at this address for 17 years.

Our trade has included all elements including suburban pub with food and gaming to late night 4am nightclub for many years. Over the past 5 years we have worked hard to turn it around to a more family friendly pub, with a greater food focus. We still continue to trade some late nights to meet customer's demands.

We have recently been granted licensing approval for renovation however are currently still undecided about which direction to take as there has been a dramatic change in the gaming tax and we are awaiting the opening of the new Gateway Shopping Centre to see what its affects are on the city of Palmerston business community.

Liquor licensing Fees

I do not support the introduction of annual liquor licensing fees because it will just increase the costs of 'brick-and-mortar' businesses, who are already over penalised and over regulated. Increased fees will continue of the trend of small family owned and Independent businesses being pushed aside by large multi-national companies.

I already costs so much to run my venue that an annual fee or tax would make it impossible for me to continue to offer the services I do. Any increase in costs currently are not able to be passed onto the customer as the threshold has been reached.

Risk-Based Licensing Fees

I do not support risk-based licensing fees, or as mentioned above, any annual liquor licence fee. I already pay, payroll tax, gaming tax, company tax, substantial local Government rates for my alfresco dining area, GST, power and water, superannuation and much much more in terms of services I pay to local tradies and other suppliers.

Risk-based licensing penalises everyone, despite their compliance history, relationship with regulators and authorities, just because of their liquor licence conditions. If a licensee is not complying with their liquor licence than Licensing NT should breach them and penalise them financially.

Licensed Trading Hours

I don't believe there is any need to change the current licence trading hours for pubs – trading hours are 100% dependent on patronage and the wants of the community. We currently trade only until 4am on Friday and Saturday nights because the needs and wants

of the consumer demands it. Should they want more, I would apply for more...but the status quo is fine at the moment.

One of measures I used to improve the safety and security of the Arch Rival was the use of an ID scanner – which I only operated during my peak trading nights. This saw every person that entered my venue scan their ID and a finger print taken. I saw an immediately positive affect on my venue and the behaviour of patrons and issues such as bag thefts and other petty criminal acts are no longer an issue.

I no longer use the ID Scanner anymore, because I don't need to based on the good behaviour of my patrons. I would have no problem introducing it again if I felt I needed to improve the venue's security should the issue arise again.

I have been operating for 17 years and as the business currently stands it is a very challenging trading environment, barely viable and any further costs or reduction in trading hours would hurt the financial position of the venue and possible cripple it.

Promotional Codes

The current Code of Practice in Promotional Conduct is old – it was around when I first started working in hospitality in 1990– obviously this needs to be updated. The language is outdated and over the years operators have gotten creative in working around the code.

As I have stated in a submission for The Deck Bar, this is one tool that the Regulator could use to ensure responsible practices from industry, which everyone I know in industry fully supports it. The extreme discounting of drinks on-premise (down to \$3 in some places now!) is a sign of financial desperation and should be stopped through a strong promotional code of conduct. A licensee needs to show financial ability when applying for a liquor license and excessive discounting is not only a race to the bottom but is irresponsible in their position as licensee and if was entered into their business model when applying would surely not have been approved. No one goes into business to excessively discount and it is a sign that things have gone pear shaped and they are not sure of what else to do. It damages the reputation of the industry as well as the viability of the industry.

I'm not sure why it has taken so long for Licensing or the Government to update this document – industry can't be expected to self-regulate on this, after all we are in competition with each other.

I made recommendations to the previous Minister and Department of Business CEO of the time that certain conditions within the accord which make great sense could be inserted into the new promotional code of conduct to ensure that excessive discounting or questionable promotions such as the recent 'Red Cups' promotion never happen.

I do get very concerned with excessive discounts of drinks, because in the end when the licensees can't pay their bills its staff and debtors – who are often small service businesses that are not paid all their entitlements.

RSA

I make all my staff aware of the fact it is illegal to sell someone alcohol that is intoxicated and have never been breached on this licence condition. I support the universal RSA qualification.

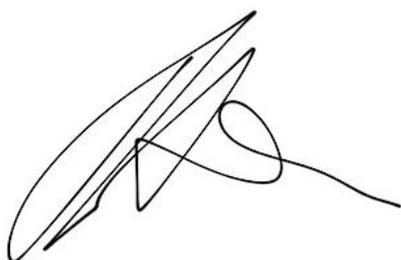
Illegal Drugs

After being involved in the hospitality industry for so long – I have really seen it all. A big part of my work in this venue was working the door with our crowd controllers on weekends so my experience in dealing with every kind of situation has been quite the education experience. Over the last couple of years, the use of illegal and prescription drugs has become more and more evident. While I recognise that alcohol contributes to some of the issue, there is no testing or matrix for what drugs are being used in our community and it is concerning. My staff are trained in RSA and don't tolerate bad behaviour – but we really have no idea what is going on behind closed doors when it comes to drugs and how to manage that in our venue. I support mandatory drug testing on all incidents where police are called and the person involved is acting erratically or is removed and taken to the watch house. Too often it is alcohol that is blamed and yet drug testing could shine more of a light on their behaviour.

Palmerston is a young city and however growing fast it has always been commercial struggle. The bright lights of Darwin have always been the biggest competition. Things are slowly changing however the average resident has only so much disposable income and we do not have a tourist trade. The increasing costs of doing business being thrown at us from every direction is making it extremely difficult to remain commercially viable. Costs cannot be passed onto the consumer however cannot be absorbed by the business. We are seeing staff reductions more and more and calls for innovation and disruption to our industry mean more reductions. I don't believe many understand just how large an employer our industry is for school leavers, students and in my case those that did not achieve to reach higher education. Our industry needs to be cherished, and encouraged not over regulated and pushed into non commercial viability. It is a common public opinion that hoteliers are 'rolling in it'. I can assure you nothing is further from the truth. This is already a hard industry, tough and challenging to survive let alone succeed. However for those that really love it, we wouldn't want to do anything else.

I am available to discuss any aspect of this submission or element of the industry that I have dedicated my life to for the past 25 odd years.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jason Hanna', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jason Hanna

Director/ Nominee

The Arch Rival Bar & Grill