

Delegate of the Director of Liquor Licensing

Decision Notice

MATTER:	Application for the grant of a licence and authorities
APPLICANT:	Ms Margaret Opie
PROPOSED PREMISES:	The Watertank Café 16B Wilkinson Street Ciccone NT 0870
OBJECTORS:	Nil
LEGISLATION:	<i>Liquor Act 2019</i> - Part 3 and 4
DECISION OF:	A/Senior Director Liquor - Licensing & Compliance
DATE OF DECISION:	4 October 2024

DECISION

1. As a delegate of the Director of Liquor Licensing (the Director), I approve the application by Ms Margaret Opie for the grant of a liquor licence with a restaurant authority and catering authority. The operation of the restaurant authority is to be at the premises known as The Watertank Café, 16B Wilkinson Street, Ciccone, whereas the catering authority will operate at other various locations with Alice Springs to serve persons who have engaged the licensee to provide catering services at those premises.
2. The licence is granted in pursuance of section 60 of the *Liquor Act 2019* (the Act), with reference to sections 47(1)(b) and (m) of the Act, being a restaurant and catering authority respectively.
3. The operating conditions in relation to a restaurant authority and catering authority are in accordance with Part 4, Division 15 and Part 4, Division 5 of the *Liquor Regulations 2019* (the Regulations) respectively and the following special conditions:

Restaurant authority

- a) The hours of operation are from 10:00 and 23:59 seven (7) days a week except Good Friday and Christmas Day;
- b) The hours of operation on Good Friday and Christmas day are from 11:00 to 21:00;

- c) The licensee may extend their trade on New Year's Eve until 02:00 the following day if they provide written notification to the Director of Liquor Licensing (the Director) before 3 December of the year preceding the New Year's Day;

Catering authority

- d) The hours of operation are from 11:30 to 23:59 seven (7) days a week;
- e) For the avoidance of doubt the restrictions on trade under the restaurant authority for Good Friday and Christmas Day do not apply to sales under this authority.
- f) Liquor may only be sold and supplied ancillary to the food provided by the licensee as part of the catering services;
- g) Licensee must notify the Director of the catering event including the date, time, location, hirer and number of patrons as well as confirmation of authority to sell liquor at the premises from the owner or controller of the premises no later than seven (7) days prior to the event;
- h) The sale of liquor under this authority does not provide for the catering of events at The Watertank Café for which the restaurant authority operates, or that fall within the definition of a major event authority pursuant to section 47(1)(o) of the Act.

BACKGROUND

- 4. Pursuant to section 52 of the Act, Ms Margaret Opie has sought the licensee as a natural person and has operated the premises as a café for many years. The premises are well known and regarded with Ms Opie having applied for numerous special event authority licences for events over the years.
- 5. The frequency of these and the commercial nature of them has necessitated this application lodged an application, which was lodged with the Director on 13 August 2024.

CURRENT SITUATION

- 6. The application is for a licence to allow for the sale of liquor by the licensee not only at the premises under the restaurant authority, but as part of catering services to corporate or social events at various unlicensed locations in and around the Alice Springs area.
- 7. The licensee regularly conducts events at their existing café and is approached by persons to cater for events, to date for which they have obtained special event authorities. The ongoing and commercial nature of those licences has necessitated this application.
- 8. At this time the café operates weekdays (except Tuesday) from 07:00 to 14:00 and from 08:00 to 14:00 on a weekend.

9. This licence will allow Ms Opie to expand and offer dinner service, although it is noted it is not her intention to operate each night at this point. For business efficacy it was recommended Ms Opie seek the hours allowed for a restaurant authority, so that as needed she may operate without the need to continually seek approval from the Director.
10. It is envisaged the operation of the catering authority will be based from the existing premises in Ciccone, albeit not trade there.
11. The applicant has provided the material prescribed in section 52 of the Act including:
 - an affidavit made under section 54;
 - evidence necessary to satisfy the onus specified in section 51; and
 - the application fee.
12. A food and drink menu was provided by the licensee in support of the application. It is expected by the nature of the café and the separate catering of events, the menus will from time to time vary. This reflects the availability of goods and the client's preferences with regards to the catering authority.
13. The varying nature of the food on offer notwithstanding, the Regulations require all persons being served liquor to also be consuming **food from the licensee** and a reasonable range of non-alcoholic drinks and water must also be available to patrons irrespective of which authority relates to the service.
14. For the avoidance of doubt, this does not allow the licensee to sell liquor at an event where another party is providing the food.

NOTIFICATIONS, PUBLIC NOTICES AND OBJECTIONS

15. Pursuant to section 57 of the Act, the applications were subject to public notification in the usual manner.
16. In pursuance of section 56(4) of the Act the application was notified to the Commissioner of Police and the Chief Executive Officers of the Department of Health (Health) and Alice Springs Town Council.
17. Although not a statutory requirement, as is practice, notification of the application was sent to the Northern Territory Fire and Rescue Service (NTFRS).
18. Police and Health advised they had no objections to the application, and no responses were received from the Alice Springs Town Council nor NTFRS.
19. No objections were received from any person in relation these applications.

APPLICATION

20. The applicant has provided a comprehensive suite of materials in support of the application including all materials prescribed by the Act.
21. The authorities sought by the applicant are in pursuance of sections 47(1)(b) and (m) of the Act.
22. The determination of applications under section 60(1) of the Act has been conditionally delegated by the Liquor Commission to the Director of Liquor Licensing. The limitation including the authorities which may be granted under delegation being a restaurant authority and catering authority.
23. A limitation placed on the delegation are for applications where an objection has been received. No objections were received and therefore it may be determined under delegation.
24. The Director further delegated these powers to me by instrument.

DISCLOSURE OF PERSONS

25. Section 54 of the Act requires the applicant to make an affidavit disclosing each person who, if the licence is issued, may:
 - (a) be able to influence the applicant; or
 - (b) expect a direct or indirect benefit from the applicant.
26. I am satisfied with the materials provided by the applicant in relation to this requirement and note the applicant already operates the café from the existing premises.

RESULTS OF INVESTIGATION

27. Section 58 of the Act enables the Director to conduct an investigation into an application as considered appropriate. No materials have been discovered or provided to indicate there are any adverse matters in relation to this application.
28. A fulsome Business Plan was provided detailing the nature of the business.

FINANCIAL STABILITY

29. I am satisfied with the materials provided of the financial stability and business reputation of the applicant.
30. As written previously, Ms Opie has operated these premises for many years and it is a well-established operator.

FIT AND PROPER PERSON

31. Section 59(3)(g)(i) of the Act requires the decision maker to consider whether the applicant is fit and proper to hold a licence.
32. The applicant provided materials in support of this and as Ms Opie has sought the licence as a natural person, the provisions of section 53(3) of the Act are not enlivened. No nominee is required.
33. Having considered the materials provided I am satisfied the applicant, Ms Opie is a fit and proper person to hold a licence.

PUBLIC INTEREST AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

34. Section 49 of the Act requires the decision maker to be satisfied the applicant is fit and proper, the licence or authority is in the public interest and will not have a significant adverse impact on the community.
35. The first branch of the requirement has already been addressed.
36. It remains to consider whether the application is in the public interest, to do so consideration must be given to the objectives prescribed in section 49(2) of the Act which include:
 - a. minimising the harm or ill-health caused to people, or a group of people, by the consumption of liquor;
 - b. ensuring liquor is to be sold, supplied, served and consumed on or in licensed premises in a responsible manner;
 - c. safeguarding public order and safety, particularly when large numbers of people would be attracted to licensed premises or an area adjacent to those premises;
 - d. protecting the safety, health and welfare of people who use licensed premises;
 - e. increasing cultural, recreational, employment or tourism benefits for the local community area;

- f. promoting compliance with this Act and other relevant laws of the Territory;
 - g. ensuring each person involved in the business conducted at licensed premises receives training suitable to the person's role in the business;
 - h. preventing the giving of credit in sales of liquor to people;
 - i. preventing the practices that encourage irresponsible drinking;
 - j. reducing or limiting increases in anti-social behaviour.
37. In determining whether there would be a “significant adverse impact on the community” section 49(3) of the Act prescribes the decision maker “must consider the following”:
- a. the risk of undue offence, annoyance, disturbance or inconvenience to persons who reside or work in the vicinity of the proposed licensed premises or who are using, or travelling to or from, a place of public worship, a hospital or a school;
 - b. the geographic area that would be affected;
 - c. the risk of harm from the excessive or inappropriate consumption of liquor;
 - d. the people or community who would be affected;
 - e. the effect on culture, recreation, employment and tourism;
 - f. the effect on social amenities and public health;
 - g. the ratio of existing liquor licences and authorities in the community to the population of the community;
 - h. the effect of the volume of liquor sales on the community;
 - i. the community impact assessment guidelines issued under section 50;
 - j. any other matter prescribed by regulation.
38. The Act is clear in that the applicant bears the onus of satisfying the decision maker of the relevant matters, irrespective of whether no objections were received as is the case in this matter.
39. In relation to the issue of the community impact and public interest, those matters have previously been published under section 6A of the *Liquor Act 1978* and in force immediately before the commencement of the *Liquor Act 2019*, and are taken to be community impact assessment guidelines issued under section 50 of the Act.
40. Those matters remain as previously published in numerous decisions by the Liquor Commission and I am guided by these decisions.

CONSIDERATION CRITERIA

41. Consideration must be made of the applicant's affidavit, the results of any investigation, objections and responses, the suitability of the premises along with the appropriateness of the applicant to be a licensee.

42. With regards to the matters raised in section 49(2) of the Act, I note the following:

- a. minimising the harm or ill-health caused to people, or a group of people, by the consumption of liquor is to be minimised:

I am satisfied the provision of liquor is complementary to the café operations and a natural part of the catering services to be provided by the licensee.

- b. ensuring liquor is to be sold, supplied, served and consumed, on or in licensed premises in a responsible manner:

Having considered all the material, it is unlikely any liquor sold, supplied, served and consumed will be done so in an irresponsible manner.

- c. safeguarding public order and safety, particularly when large numbers of people would be attracted to licensed premises or an area adjacent to those premises:

The existing café is in a quiet industrial area and the nature of the events held at the café are not ones that would attract anti-social behaviour. Likewise, the private and limited nature of the catering of events naturally restricts patronage, making it improbable that public order and safety are likely to be jeopardised by the operation of the licence, also the licensee has prepared a suitable business plan including processes to safeguard against harm.

- d. protecting the safety, health and welfare of people who use licensed premises:

The policies developed by the applicant applicable to the premises are considered to adequately protect the safety, health and welfare of people who are likely to use the licensed premises during its hours of operation.

- e. increasing cultural, recreational, employment or tourism benefits for the local community area:

The primary intention of the licence is to provide catering services to corporate and private events only and sales to diners at the café.

- f. promoting compliance with this Act and other relevant laws of the Territory:

There are no materials provided which would suggest the applicant will not comply with the Act and any other relevant laws.

- g. ensuring each person involved in the business conducted at licensed premises receives training suitable to the person's role in the business:

I am satisfied the applicant will appropriately manage and supervise service staff.

- h. preventing the giving of credit in sales of liquor to people:

No issues have been raised to suggest there is any concern in relation to this objective.

- i. preventing the practices that encourage irresponsible drinking:

No issues have been raised to suggest there is any concern in relation to this objective.

- j. reducing or limiting increases in anti-social behaviour:

No issues have been raised to suggest there is any concern in relation to this objective.

43. Turning to the matters under section 49(3):

- a. the risk of undue offence, annoyance, disturbance or inconvenience to persons who reside or work in the vicinity of the proposed licensed premises or who are using, or travelling to or from, a place of public worship, a hospital or a school:

There are no materials to suggest there is a significant risk of undue offence, annoyance, disturbance or inconvenience likely to be caused by the granting of these authorities.

- b. the geographic area that would be affected:

The locations of the events for catering will by the nature of the business vary and there has been no issues to date concerning the conduct of similar licensed events under a special event authority by this licensee.

As written earlier, the café is within an industrial area with little residential housing in the immediate vicinity.

- c. the risk of harm from the excessive or inappropriate consumption of liquor:

As previously indicated, there are no materials to suggest there will be excessive consumption of liquor.

- d. the people or community who would be affected:

The catering events will be private in nature and not open to the public. The café is unlikely to attract anti-social behaviour.

- e. the effect on culture, recreation, employment and tourism:

This is a natural growth of the business for Ms Opie with the café holding numerous cultural events and the like.

- f. the effect on social amenities and public health:

It is unlikely there will be any significant adverse impact on the social amenities and public health by the granting of this licence to the applicant.

- g. the ratio of existing liquor licences and authorities in the community to the population of the community:

It is my opinion this matter does not increase the ratio of licensed premises, and there are none within the immediate vicinity of the café.

- h. the effect of the volume of liquor sales on the community:

The minimal nature of the operation is unlikely to significantly increase the volume of liquor sales.

- i. the community impact assessment guidelines issued under section 50:

These have been considered and referred to earlier in this notice.

- 44. Having regards to the foregoing, I am satisfied that the issuing of the licence as sought is in the public interest and will not have an adverse effect on the community.

REVIEW OF DECISION

- 45. Section 27 of the Act provides for the applicant or a person who made a submission the subject of the decision, to seek a review of a decision made by the delegate of the Director.
- 46. The Director delegated the determination of applications made under section 52 of the Act by instrument to the person from time to time holding, acting in or performing the duties of the position listed in the Schedule of that instrument. This decision was made by a person referred to in that schedule.
- 47. An application for review must be lodged with the Director within 28 days after written notice of the decision is given to the person and must be in the form approved by the Director, stating the grounds for the review and the facts relied on to establish the grounds.
- 48. Accordingly, the affected persons in relation to this decision are Ms Margaret Opie, Police and Health.



Mark Wood
A/senior Director Liquor – Licensing & Compliance
Delegate of the Director of Liquor Licensing

4 October 2024