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NSW Police Force

Glenda DUNN
Senior Planner
Central Darling Shire Council
PO Box 165
Wilcannia NSW 2836

RE: RENEWAL OF ALCOHOL-FREE ZONES FOR CENTRAL DARLING SHIRE COUNCIL

Senior Planner DUNN,

I am responding to your email in relation to the re-establishment of alcohol-free zones across the Central Darling Shire Council towns of Wilcannia, Ivanhoe and Menindee.

I have reviewed data from the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (see annexure) and consulted local Police on the subject matter.

Wilcannia

The town of Wilcannia has a preponderance of alcohol-related crime within its community.

Domestic violence and assaults are prevalent, as is the presence of alcohol in a disproportionate number of these offences. Public consumption of alcohol in Wilcannia is also a regularly occurring activity.

Wilcannia has a main arterial road passing through the middle of the town. The utility of the alcohol-free zone in this instance is clear, insofar as it assists in reducing the presence of intoxication and public street drinking at a dangerous intersection utilised by a high volume of commercial road trains, trucks and other vehicles on a regular basis.

To assist the council further, the Barrier Police District would draw your attention to the restrictions currently imposed on the two licensed premises in Wilcannia, being the Wilcannia Club Hotel and the Wilcannia Golf Club. Both premises have significant conditions imposed on the respective liquor licences, which are in response to alcohol-related violence and seek to provide guidance on managing intoxication in and around the premises, minimising harm to the public and ensuring patrons are not congregating around the premises.

Additionally, in March 2021 the Independent Liquor and Gaming Authority visited Wilcannia in response to representations made by the Barrier Police District. As a result, The Independent Liquor and Gaming

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Authority is now working on implementing a regional engagement strategy with a view to conducting quarterly visits to rural communities, including Wilcannia, which have significant alcohol-related harm.

Ivanhoe and Menindee

The statistics for alcohol related assaults in Ivanhoe and Menindee provide instruction as to the relationship between inter-personal harm and alcohol in these communities. Menindee has seen a steady increase in presence of alcohol in assault incidents over the past 4 years, with a sharp increase from 59% to 72% in the last 12-month period leading to March 2022.

Ivanhoe has held a stable presence of alcohol in assault incidents over the last 4 years, with again a steep rise to 100% in the 12 months leading to 2022.

Whilst the populations of Ivanhoe and Menindee are smaller than Wilcannia, the pattern of alcohol being a recurring ingredient in matters of inter-personal harm is shared among the Central Darling communities.

In consultation with colleagues from the nominated towns, the value of the alcohol-free zones has been made clear. It offers towns with limited Policing resources the ability to interdict in the alcohol-related harm space by applying powers of disposal and seizure, the efficacy of which emerges as a valuable tool for de-escalation and disruption of situations/offenders in these instances.

In Summary, the Barrier Police District fully acknowledges the benefit of maintaining the alcohol-free zones within the Central Darling communities.

The presence of alcohol in crime categories recorded in these communities illustrates the contributing role that alcohol has in the public safety space. The supportive relationship between alcohol-free zones and policing alcohol related crime cannot be overstated, and the Barrier Police District considers it a vital community-minded measure to continue, in order to support public safety and assist Police in responding to alcohol related crime.

Senior Constable Mitch McKenny
Barrier Police District Licensing Officer
30th June 2022

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