

Evaluation of the Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island Alcohol Management System

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The communities on Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island did not have regular access to alcohol until the opening of the manganese mine in the 1960s. In the years that followed, alcohol exerted a rapidly increasing adverse effect. The Aboriginal communities and key stakeholders in the region have worked together for many years to try to reduce the severe impact of alcohol. On the 1st July 2005 an Alcohol Management System was implemented on Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island, which requires every person in the region, Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, to hold a permit to buy or consume takeaway alcohol.

This evaluation of the new Alcohol Management System included interviews of more than 62 individuals, a postal survey of township residents and review of routinely collected data and of Licensing Commission records.

Every person who was interviewed and who had knowledge of the Aboriginal communities before and after the permit system was introduced, agreed that this system has led to marked improvements in community function in those communities worst affected by alcohol. In particular there has been reduced violence and increased harmony. The consistent testimony of the women of certain communities was compelling, that violence had reduced and engagement in work or other productive activities was increasing.

“Before there was violence. Women scared, children scared. Children growing up seeing violence”.

“Since the alcohol has stopped, the men who used to be drinkers and used to be violent are going hunting. Taking their children hunting. Getting good food.”

These improvements were most marked in the communities nearest Alyangula, namely Angurugu and Malkala. Interviewees also reported a significant improvement in community harmony and function at Umbakumba, though they identify separate community efforts to control alcohol which made a major impact. The township of Alyangula was also reported to be more peaceful.

Interviewees' accounts were corroborated by police data showing marked reductions in incidents of violence coming to the attention of the police. Incidents involving aggravated assaults fell by 67% in the year following the introduction of the System to a level that was the lowest for the past four years. There was also an 86% reduction in the offence of house break-ins. The number of adults admitted to correctional centres from Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island was also the lowest in four years, with figures 23% lower than for 2002-04. The number of orders for commencement of probation and parole or other conditional liberty orders fell by 42% from 2005 to 2006, reaching a four year low.

The relative isolation of the region has made controlling the supply of alcohol easier than might be possible on some mainland communities. However there is widespread acknowledgement among interviewees that a key ingredient of the success of the Alcohol Management System is the ownership and support of the System by the Aboriginal communities and by key local service providers, employers and by the licensed premises.

Areas of concern and potential improvement to the administration of the System have been identified, and a set of recommendations is presented.

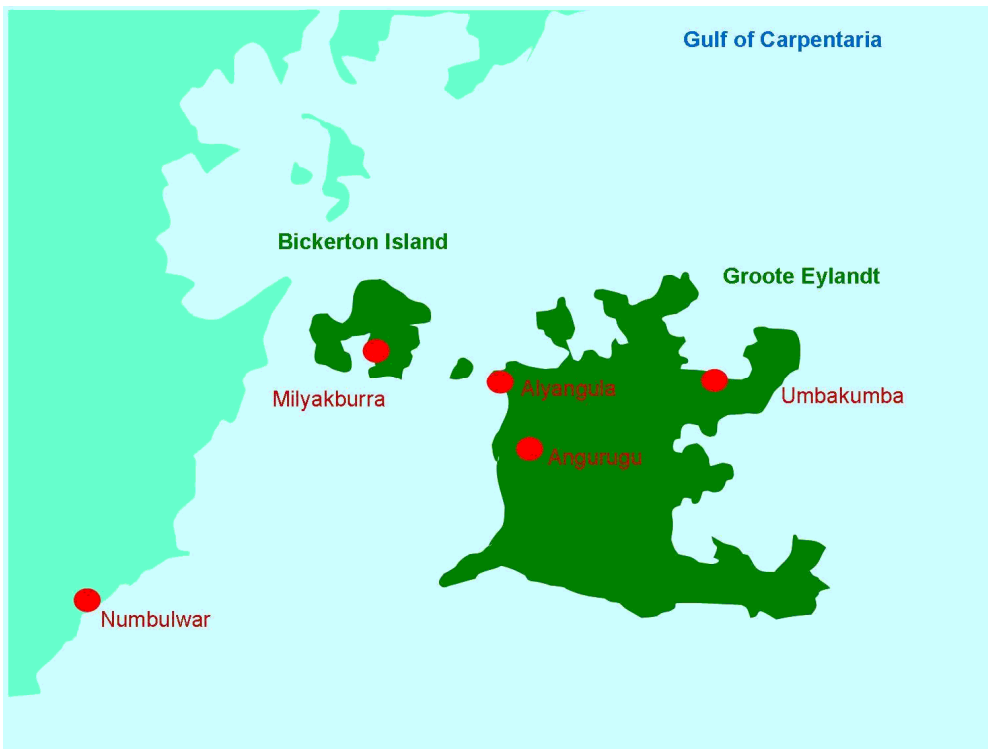
INTRODUCTION

Groote Eylandt (Dutch for Big Island) lies approximately 600 km east of Darwin, 200km south of the mining town of Nhulunbuy and 40km from the nearest point of mainland in the Gulf of Carpentaria (Figure 1). There are three main centres of population on Groote Eylandt: the two Aboriginal communities of Angurugu and Umbakumba, with average populations of 1200 and 325 respectively; and the mining town of Alyangula, with average population 800. Alyangula was established by the Groote Eylandt Mining Company (GEMCO) to support the mining of manganese.¹ Approximately 200 Indigenous people and a small number of resident non-Indigenous staff live in the community of Milyakburra on nearby Bickerton Island.² Nearly half of the population of Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island is Indigenous (48% in the 2001 Census)³ and 56% speak a language other than English at home, primarily Anindilyakwa.

On the 1st July 2005 an Alcohol Management System was implemented on Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island, which required every person in the region, Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, to hold a permit to buy or consume takeaway alcohol. Permits are recommended by a local Permit Committee and issued by Racing, Gaming and Licensing, Northern Territory Government. The System was soon reported by local community leaders and key stakeholders, including police, to have led to marked improvements in community function including reduced violence.

Racing, Gaming and Licensing, NT commissioned this evaluation to document the method of development and implementation of this System, its impacts, and any potential areas for improvement.

Figure 1: Map of Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island, Gulf of Carpentaria, showing the nearest mainland Northern Territory town of Numbulwar



Source of Map above: 'Groote Eylandt and Milyakburra Youth Development Unit Strategic Plan 2005-2006', Alyangula, March 2005.

On the map below, Groote Eylandt (slightly enlarged for visibility) is shown in relation to the rest of Australia.

Reproduced with permission from the GEMCO homepage. Available at www.gemco.com.au/component/option,com_frontpage/Itemid,1/



THE METHODS USED IN THIS EVALUATION

Overview of Methods

Between March and July 2007 a variety of routinely collected data was examined, interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, and with a number of residents of the Aboriginal communities; a survey was conducted of residents with a post office box in Alyangula (primarily Alyangula residents); and Licensing Commission records of the process of formation of the Alcohol Management System were examined.

The evaluation methods were approved by the combined Ethics Review Committee of Menzies School of Health Research and the NT Government Department of Health and Community Services.

Examination of routinely collected data

Available and relevant routinely collected data was sought on:

- School attendance (from Executive Director of Schools, NT Education Department)
- Crime statistics and police activity (from Alyangula police; the Juvenile Diversion Senior Policy Officer; and from the Assistant Commissioner of NT Police)
- Number of persons from Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island imprisoned
- Persons from Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island seeking treatment for alcohol problems at mainland treatment or rehabilitation centres
- Attendance within the GEMCO workforce and within the Community Development and Employment Programs (CDEP) at Angurugu and Umbakumba
- Permits issued and revoked (from the Supervisor of Racing, Gaming and Licensing)

Interviews

More than 62 individuals (37 Indigenous, 25 non-Indigenous; 31 men, 31 women) participated in interviews with the first investigator (KC) between March and June 2007, in some cases assisted by the other investigators (Table 1). An attempt was made to interview male and female Indigenous and non-Indigenous key stakeholders from each community. Additional community members were then recruited for interview. In Angurugu an effort was made to recruit additional Indigenous interviewees because a greater range of interviewee opinions became apparent in this community early in the interview process. In Alyangula, fewer interviews were conducted, because additional information was available from surveys (see below). Of those who participated in interviews, 27 were living in Angurugu, 13 in Umbakumba, 8 in Milyakburra, and 10 in Alyangula. Four persons were living outside the Groote Eylandt region.

In each of the 3 Aboriginal communities, Council representatives, school and clinic staff were interviewed. In addition CDEP coordinators, community corrections, Permit Committee representatives, substance misuse team staff and police representatives were interviewed. In addition to the 62 individuals that were interviewed formally, additional community members offered their views while the investigators were in the community. Telephone interviews were conducted for selected key individuals who were involved with the development of the Alcohol Management System, but do not currently live on Groote Eylandt.

Table 1: Range of people who participated in interviews

	male Indigenous	female Indigenous	male non Indigenous	female non Indigenous
Councillors				
Land Council	2	1		
Angurugu	2	4		
Umbakumba	2	1		
Milyakburra	1			
Council coordinator/manager/adviser				
Anindilyakwa Land Council			1	
Angurugu			1	
Umbakumba			1	
Milyakburra			1	
Permit committee members	2		6	3
AGENCIES				
Police				
OIC (current)			1	
OIC (past)			1	
Aboriginal Community Police Officer		1		
Domestic Violence workers				2
Health				
Clinic nurse manager/senior nurse on duty				
Angurugu				1
Umbakumba				1
Milyakburra				1
Doctor			1	
Aboriginal health staff				
Angurugu	1	1		
Umbakumba	1			
Substance misuse team	1			
Corrections				
Corrections Officer			1	
School				
Principals/head teachers				
Angurugu			1	
Teachers' aides/other Indigenous education staff				
Angurugu		2		
Umbakumba		2		
Milyakburra		2		

	male Indigenous	female Indigenous	male non Indigenous	female non Indigenous
Major employers:				
GEMCO				
Community liaison officer				
Present			1	
Past			1	
CDEP coordinator				
Angurugu			1	
Umbakumba			1	
Liquor licensees			2	
Representative of Racing, Gaming and Licensing NT Licensing Commission			1	
officers involved				1
Domestic violence officers (Angurugu)		2		
Substance misuse team	1			
other Indigenous community members:				
Angurugu	4	3		
Umbakumba	1	3		
Milyakburra	2	2		

NB: A number of individuals had more than one professional or community role, so the total number of persons in the table exceeds 62. Where 3 or more persons were interviewed together (as happened on 3 occasions), they are entered in this table as only one individual, as it is difficult to be sure that each had the opportunity to fully express an independent view.

Each interviewee was asked for their view on the Alcohol Management System and, if they were aware of the Permit Committee, their views on how it works. Suggestions for improvements of both the System and the committee were sought.

Data analysis

Data analysis included extracting and summarising recurring themes from interviews. This was done independently by two investigators (EP and KC), and then the results compared, and where there was disagreement, the analysis was reviewed and a consensus reached. Illustrative quotes are provided in this report, but due to the need to protect confidentiality we have withheld the identity of the interviewees. The quantitative data was tabulated or graphed to facilitate interpretation of trends. The number of incidents which came to the attention of

the police in the 12 months after the introduction of the Alcohol Management System in July 2005 were compared with the number in the year preceding the System's introduction. For data where the 12-18 months appeared to have been atypical (perhaps due to increases in violence relating to the abandonment of voluntary alcohol takeaway limits), the recent data were also compared with data from the first year that figures were available to us.

RESULTS OF THE EVALUATION

Background and history

Although Aboriginal communities in the Groote Eylandt area may have had sporadic contact with alcohol prior to European colonisation, it was not until the 1960's with the opening of the GEMCO mine ⁴ that alcohol became regularly accessible. One of the conditions imposed on the mining company in the 1964 agreement with the traditional owners was that GEMCO must minimise the social impact of the mine on the Aboriginal communities and in particular must minimise the impact of alcohol. ²

However, in the years that followed, alcohol exerted a rapidly increasing adverse effect, causing major community disruption, including increased violence. In an attempt to limit the impact of alcohol, in 1980 a restricted area under the Liquor Act was declared over the whole of Groote Eylandt and neighbouring islands, except for the township of Alyangula and the prawn processing depot at Bartalumba Bay.⁵ The Umbakumba area was able to have access to beer, but permits were required for wine and spirits. This meant that alcohol could not be brought into, consumed, sold, or disposed of in any of the restricted areas.

Despite this, the 1980s are described by community members and other witnesses as years of great violence. By 1986 Groote Eylandt had one of the highest imprisonment rates reported in the world, and it was assessed that the majority of crime was alcohol-related. ⁶ In the late 1980's a number of women and men from Angurugu moved to address this crisis by further restricting access to alcohol. As a result of meetings and discussions, all the Aboriginal communities decided that their residents should no longer be allowed to become members of the licensed club.⁶ This, in theory, stopped all access to takeaway alcohol and closed off the major drinking premises (the Alyangula Recreation Club {ARC} and the Alyangula Golf Club) to Aboriginal community members. While there was a significant improvement following this initiative, nevertheless alcohol continued to be either purchased or otherwise obtained illegally. ⁶

Umbakumba is an hour's drive from Alyangula, but was the only Aboriginal community on Groote to have its own canteen. This operated in the 1980's. The community experienced considerable violence and disruption during the period that the canteen was open. In the early 1990's the Umbakumba community, with the strong influence of its women and supported by the Living with Alcohol Program, decided to restrict access to alcohol by means of a beer ration.⁷ Stronger forms of alcohol were now banned altogether from the community. The beer ration started at 14 cartons for the community per day, but over the ensuing years this amount was reduced to once per week, and reduced in quantity. Originally the men of the community were in control of ordering the ration, but in the months leading up to the introduction of the Alcohol Management System the women were handed control of the ration (interviews with Umbakumba councillors and staff). If there was trouble arising from drinking, the ration was cut for a period of time. At the time of writing, the beer ration had been cut out altogether for the last six months.

Because of its isolation, the Bickerton Island community of Milyakburra has never had regular access to alcohol and accordingly alcohol has been a sporadic rather than a regular or severe issue in that community.

Alcohol-related problems in the years immediately preceding the implementation of the Alcohol Management System

While the above efforts significantly reduced access to alcohol, and led to reductions in alcohol-related violence (interviews with community members and other witnesses), the success of this measure was only partial. There continued to be access to alcohol, often illegally. This largely came from persons who had the right to buy takeaway alcohol in the mining town of Alyangula, both local residents and visiting contractors, and by way of thefts of alcohol from homes or licensed premises.^{6, 8} The alcohol was either consumed in the bush ("bush club") or returned to the homes in the Aboriginal communities. In either case disturbances and assaults were common from intoxicated persons.⁸ Those communities closest to the mining town, Angurugu and Malkala, experienced the biggest impact from alcohol.

The houses in Alyangula are predominantly owned by the mine, with some owned by the government for key agencies, and to live in Alyangula people must be employed by one of these bodies. Some Aboriginal employees of the mines chose to live there, and until 2005 this meant that they had automatic right of access to alcohol. The GEMCO conditions of employment provided strict limitations on supply of alcohol to Aboriginal community members in an effort to reduce alcohol-related harm to the communities.⁸ Although alcohol could be served in an Alyangula home to an Aboriginal community member, the alcohol was not allowed to leave the premises. In addition the host was held responsible for the behaviour of the guests, so that if intoxicated guests left and then caused trouble in town or in their own community, the host could “face disciplinary action up to and including dismissal”.⁸ This meant that that the Alyangula resident could potentially lose both their job and their right to a house in the township.

Many Aboriginal residents of Alyangula found themselves in a difficult situation. They regularly came under intense pressure from relatives or other community members to buy alcohol for them, and under traditional culture, it was not appropriate to refuse certain persons. Regardless of their response, they continued to receive unrelenting pressure or “humbug”, at any time of day or night.

In addition to pressuring friends and relatives, some community members waited in the clubs’ car parks or in the streets of Alyangula, hoping to find someone who would buy alcohol for them, or give it to them. A black market arose with cartons of beer selling for up to \$100.⁸

By June 2002 ‘it was evident that certain residents of Alyangula were purchasing excessive amounts of liquor... up to seven cartons of heavy beer at a time’⁸ which was being supplied to non-Alyangula residents. There were also repeated break-ins to premises where alcohol was believed to be stored. There was reported to be regular violence related to alcohol, often starting while persons were intoxicated, but the resulting community tensions then continued on for far longer. Weapons were often used and there were deaths.⁸

The informal system of limits to takeaway alcohol purchases

Over a number of years, various community members, elders, and key agencies repeatedly raised concerns about the levels of alcohol-related violence. Many complaints were taken to the community liaison officer at GEMCO, as GEMCO was seen as having a responsibility for dealing with alcohol-related harms, given their 1964 agreement to reduce the social impact of the mine; and also their control over the Alyangula township where the alcohol was purchased.

According to interviews of community members and key stakeholders, in 2002 the women of Angurugu met to urge change and to put a stop to alcohol-related violence. This was followed by meetings of Angurugu Community Government Council and with Anindilyakwa Land Council representatives, where serious concern was voiced about the ongoing high levels of violence being experienced. As a result of these meetings, Walter Amagula, then Chair of the Anindilyakwa Land Council, met with Rick Peters, the GEMCO community liaison officer, to urge for a solution to this problem. They then sought the support of the Officer-in-Charge of the local (Alyangula) Police, Tony Fuller, to change this situation.

From 2002, GEMCO employees for whom alcohol had become a concern could seek a voluntary limit to takeaway alcohol purchase.⁸ This system was developed by GEMCO in association with Anindilyakwa Land Council, police and the individual employees in an effort to protect the employee's job and housing and to reduce the impact of alcohol on the Aboriginal communities. The employee could request the police to prepare a letter stating the person's name and the amount of alcohol they were permitted to buy as takeaway from either of the licensed premises. This gave employees an externally set limit to the amount of alcohol they could provide for relatives, and helped to protect their own employment and housing. It had no legal basis, but helped to deter relatives from harassing the individual into buying alcohol on their behalf.

However, some drinkers who had initially agreed to a limit later sought to lift their limits, or to avoid restrictions, for example by buying from both of Alyangula's licensed premises.⁸ The system could not be enforced or imposed, as it was voluntary.

Despite some successes with this system, concerns were raised that this method of 'rations' could be accused of being discriminatory and could be legally challenged. Because of this, the use of individual takeaway alcohol limits for Alyangula residents was reduced and then largely abandoned by May 2004.⁸

The search for a more definitive solution

While the informal system of individual takeaway limits was still in place, a committee was formed which included representatives of the Land Council, the Community Councils, health services, the township of Alyangula and liquor licensees. A decision was made to try to ratify the system of voluntary individual limits and to seek the support of the Northern Territory (NT) Racing, Gaming and Licensing Authority to do so.

It was agreed that the Officer in Charge of Alyangula Police, Senior Sergeant Tony Fuller, should prepare a draft plan for action, and that this would be a focus for discussion and consultation. The process of consultation with key stakeholders, members of the Aboriginal communities, and of Alyangula then progressed with the strong backing of the Land Council and Community Councils.

A representative of this group contacted the NT Racing, Gaming and Licensing Authority and asked what could be done to limit the supply of alcohol on Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island. The office of the licensing authority advised that the community itself should develop a plan outlining the communities' wishes and this could then be submitted to the Licensing Commission. This plan was to be refined with the help of Racing Gaming and Licensing officers.

In order to demonstrate the commitment of the broader community, Walter Amagula collected up to 300 signatures on a letter seeking greater control over alcohol (interview of key stakeholder). This evidence of community backing gave greater ability to the police to support the process.

A draft management plan was prepared by Tony Fuller and circulated to other key committee members. From late 2002 onwards, a Senior Policy Officer from Racing, Gaming and Licensing, Peter Jones, visited Groote on a number of

occasions to meet with key stakeholders and advise on the development of the draft plan. With his support and advice on what was legally possible in licensing decisions, the details evolved. In April 2003, Alyangula Police formally requested officers from the Racing, Gaming and Licensing Division to meet with them and other community stakeholders to discuss the current voluntary methods for limiting alcohol consumption. Between April and August 2003, 12 drafts of the Liquor Management Plan were made before the final draft was presented to the Minister for Racing, Gaming and Licensing for his information and action (Groote Eylandt Echo 22/8/03). Assurances were sought from the NT Anti-Discrimination Commission and were received on 24th September 2003 reassuring the Licensing Commission that the draft plan did not breach the provisions of the Act.

While this plan was being developed, on 10th May 2004 Tony Fuller wrote to the Chairman of the Licensing Commission, Peter Allen, advising that the system of voluntary takeaway limits was no longer being enforced by the two licensed premises, because of concerns of discrimination on racial grounds. As a consequence, there was excessive liquor purchasing by a few residents and a dramatic increase in alcohol-related incidents at Angurugu.⁸ Urgent assistance was sought to stem the flow of alcohol from the liquor outlets until the public hearings on the Liquor Management Plan could occur, and the legislation be introduced.

In an effort to curb alcohol-related violence, the Chair of the Anindilyakwa Land Council, Tony Wurramarrba, also wrote on the 11th May 2004 to the Chairman of the Licensing Commission requesting an order that **all** residents of Alyangula be limited to buying 1 carton of beer or 1 bottle of spirits per day. In June 2004, he wrote again asking that a public hearing be arranged as soon as possible. As nothing had been heard by September 2004, the members of the Groote Eylandt Regional Crime Prevention Council wrote to the NT Minister, Syd Stirling, asking for his urgent assistance in promoting the Groote Eylandt Liquor Management Plan. Alcohol-related incidents were increasing and innocent community members were suffering as a result. (Letter to the Hon Syd Stirling, MLA Nhulunbuy, Minister for Racing, Gaming and Licensing, 6 September 2004).

The Minister's office was asked for the current Commission members to continue in their roles into 2005 (source: Under Treasurer's Minute, September 2004). This was to avoid the process having to begin again with the appointment of new Commission members in the new year. Peter Jones again visited Groote Eylandt in October 2004 to discuss the proposed changes to the current system in the Liquor Management Plan with community members and all other stakeholders.

In November 2004 a public notice described the anticipated effects that the Liquor Management Plan would have on residents of the 3 major communities on Groote Eylandt (Alyangula, Angurugu and Umbakumba). In summary, permits would be needed by anyone who wished to consume alcohol at their own residence or those of other permit holders, or to buy takeaway supplies.

1. The Plan did not limit the type or amount of liquor that could be purchased by permit holders.
2. All residents of Alyangula needed to be financial members of the ARC or the Golf Club in order to obtain takeaway liquor; all Alyangula members of either Club were to have their names put forward for a permit from the Licensing Commission unless they advised they did not wish this to occur.
3. Angurugu and Umbakumba members could also have their names sent forward for a permit. However their permits would not allow them to take liquor into Angurugu, or onto Groote Eylandt by plane or barge. Umbakumba residents were allowed to apply to possess and consume liquor at their residences and those of other permit holders, but were subject to the same restrictions on importation of liquor.

While these processes were occurring, efforts continued to control the supply of alcohol. In February 2005 the ARC changed its membership rules, so that local residents had to apply for membership after their first visit to the club. A membership card was also required to access the entrance doors to the club or bottle shop.

The Licensing Commission hearings

The Commission's public hearings finally took place on Groote Eylandt in early December 2004 and again in March 2005 (Table 2). Commissioner Alan Clough chaired the hearings, assisted by Commissioners Annette Smith and Paul Costigan.² Hearings were held in each of the 3 Aboriginal communities and Alyangula in the most public places available, so that everyone could attend. Hearings in Alyangula were timed for both the evening and during the day so that shift workers could attend if they wished.

Thirty people participated in Umbakumba and 15 in Milyakburra and translation was available. In Umbakumba and Milyakburra the view of the communities was presented at meetings by community spokesmen and little dissent was expressed (Decision, page 20).² Specific concerns or issues were raised by participants, but these largely concerned refinements of the plan, rather than disagreement with its principles.

For example, at the hearing in Milyakburra, the community spokesman stated that the Aboriginal people were willing to make allowances for non-Indigenous staff but no Aboriginal people should be able to purchase takeaway liquor

“Any balanda [non-Indigenous person] that came and worked with us, because they grew up that way, we don't want to pull that away from them...but for us mob blackfellas, no permits to takeaway... For blackfellas, permits for takeaway, Bickerton, two letters: N.O.” (Decision, page 20)²

Another issue raised was the desire for temporary allowance for visitors to Alyangula on official business to be able to drink in Alyangula. One of the licensees, Geoff Wood, clarified that permission to drink in the club could already be arranged by a letter of permission from the Community Council allowing temporary club access.

At the Angurugu public meeting, attended by 60 people, there were heated interactions. Several people dominated proceedings in a noisy manner and it

was difficult for the hearing to proceed constructively. The Chair of the hearing panel was eventually able to sum up participants' point of consensus by putting a proposition to the group 'that Angurugu people did not want any alcohol whatsoever coming into their community' (Decision, page 17).² This met with general agreement, the meeting was adjourned, and separate meetings were arranged with the Angurugu Government Council and Angurugu Health Centre so that those affiliated with these groups could "have their views recorded unimpeded".²

At the first meeting in the mining town of Alyangula, 8 members of the public were in attendance. At the second Alyangula public meeting 10 people attended. Points of concern or needing clarification were raised including the question of how the restrictions would relate to transport or consumption of liquor on boats, and the need for clarity on who can transport alcohol by vehicle through dry areas.

Table 2: Dates and sites for hearings

6 th December 2004	Umbakumba and Alyangula
7 th December 2004	Angurugu
8 th December 2004	Angurugu Health Centre and Milyakburra
9 th December 2004	Alyangula
1 st March 2005	Angurugu Council and Alyangula
2 nd March 2005	Angurugu Health Centre and Alyangula

The Licensing Commission Decision

On May 11, 2005, the Licensing Commission declared the region of Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island as a restricted area.² Under the decision, the whole of Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island became a restricted area except for the 2 licensed clubs (Alyangula Recreation Club and the Alyangula Golf Club) and the Police Social Club, which holds a licence under the Special Licenses Provision of the Liquor Act. Every person on Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island now requires a permit to buy takeaway alcohol. This permit is issued with the condition

that alcohol can only be consumed in those areas set out in the schedule to the decision, and which include Alyangula and the area surrounding Umbakumba.

To provide clarity over drinking on beaches or very close to shore in otherwise dry areas, for the purposes of the Licensing Decision, land was defined as being 'dry land or on tidal land that is partly submerged in seawater' (Decision p39).²

The decision sets out that the Licensing Commission will issue a permit to an individual only after seeking advice about that individual's application from the Groote Eylandt permit assessment committee. It was recommended that the Licensed Clubs have their conditions of licensing altered to require them to only sell takeaway liquor to holders of a valid liquor permit.

The permit assessment committee was recommended to be formed of one nominated representative from at least the following groups:

- i) Police
- ii) Land Council
- iii) GEMCO
- iv) Each of the 3 Community Councils
- v) Each of the 2 licensed clubs
- vi) Health Services
- vii) Community or consumer representative.

Permits can hold special conditions, such as limits on the type or quantity of liquor, or the locations or times that liquor may be consumed. The decision provided for suspension of all permits for 24 hours on the recommendation of the Permit Committee or NT Police if it were necessary for community safety or cultural reasons. Permits can be revoked if the bearer breaches any conditions of the permit.

The permit was to be a conditional privilege, and persons accepting a permit would be informed that information about their liquor purchases may be provided to NT Police for the purpose of law enforcement and enforcement of the Alcohol Management System. To facilitate this, the licensed clubs are required to record

all liquor purchases against the purchaser's permit number.⁹ This information must be provided to Police or Licensing inspectors on request.

The Licensing decision was and has been implemented from July 1, 2005. Soon afterwards, another visit was made to Groote (in August 2005) by the three Liquor Commissioners, to meet with the Permit Application and Assessment Committee.

Feedback on the adequacy of the consultation process

As described in the history section above, a lengthy series of meetings and community consultation efforts were held before the formal Licensing Commission hearings. At least one Licensing Commission hearing was then held in each community.

Feedback from interviews with community members and key stakeholders on consultation

One key Indigenous stakeholder provided an overview of the process of consultation and engagement that went on, for the benefit of other communities who might be interested in developing a similar system:

[There were] "lots of arguments, frustrations, people leaving the table. But there's always another day. Talk again. The police stood up with us. Got to talk with education, health, everyone" [ID 17, Indigenous man, Angurugu]

Another Indigenous leader described how he encouraged placing family before the individuals' wants or needs:

"Some men didn't like it. I told them 'You've got to put your family first' [ID 38, Indigenous man, Angurugu]

Key stakeholders described how considerable opportunity was made available for community members and agencies to provide feedback on the proposed plans. This opportunity was utilised by key stakeholders, Community Councils and the Land Council. The level of general community engagement in the consultation process about the proposed plan reportedly varied between communities, despite some repeated efforts by Community Councils and key stakeholders to achieve this.

In the hearings themselves, most interviewees agreed there were opportunities to voice opinions.

“A lot of feedback was given by people who don’t like it” [ID 17, Indigenous man, Angurugu]

The public meeting in Angurugu was heated and at times disrupted (Licensing decision) and one interviewee reported

“A lot couldn’t get a say at the Commission Hearing. The ladies said, and some men said ‘It was hard to get a say’ ”. [ID 39, Indigenous woman, Alyangula]

Some female Indigenous interviewees in Angurugu were very aware that the drinking men wished them to stay silent during the Hearings, but they were “strong women” and persisted

“In hearings, men said ‘you women who don’t drink should be quiet’. But our families are drinking and suffering, so we have to talk. Women and children are suffering” [ID 31, Indigenous woman, Angurugu]

Two interviewees from Angurugu described a separate consultation held by Commissioner Annette Smith with some women from Angurugu community, which was organised to allow them to have unfettered discussion, separate from the men. These consultations, although sanctioned by the Commission, were held without the knowledge of the men or of the wider community so that the participants could feel more secure and comfortable. According to ex-Commissioner Smith, women told her of appalling incidents they had suffered through the effects of alcohol and their experience of terror (interview, A. Smith, June 2007). To protect their anonymity and confidentiality, and because of the strong support of the general community for the proposed Alcohol Management System, the women’s comments in these closed hearing sessions were not recorded and transcribed.

Description of the implementation of the System (from interviews)

Several key stakeholders pointed out that no finances were made available to them by the Licensing Commission for the purpose of implementation of the Alcohol Management System. The process of formation of the Permit Committee, administrative tasks, providing the required signage and attempts at public education about the new system largely fell to the police. There was no formal education process after the licensing decision was made. Several articles were written by the Officer in Charge of police for the community newsletter, the Grootte Eylandt Echo.

One licensee reported significant financial outlay to facilitate the club's ability to meet the new licensing requirements, which now included checking of permits, and recording of all alcohol purchases against the permit number. This licensee elected to control and monitor sales electronically, with swipe card entry to the premises; and a cash register which can only be activated for a sale when the purchaser has a valid permit, and which displays the nature of any permit conditions. The other licensed premises elected to use manual checking of permits and a paper based monitoring system.

When the permit system was first introduced, there were some implementation challenges. All members of the two licensed clubs were eligible to apply for a permit. The Liquor Act states that individuals have to apply for a permit, which would have required some 1,000 applications to be completed. Given the wish to commence the new system by 1 July this was dealt with by:

1. advising all club members that they would need a permit to obtain takeaway liquor;
2. advising all club members that as they already had the option of purchasing takeaway as part of their club membership, their name would be forwarded to the local Permit Committee unless they advised that this was not their wish;
3. the Permit Committee considered the list of names provided by the clubs, and then made recommendations to the Licensing Commission including recommendations on any conditions that should apply to individuals;

4. the Licensing Commission considered the Permit Committee's recommendations and issued, did not issue, or issued with conditions, permits on this basis.

In the above process, a half a dozen or so permits were refused. When the club members received this advice two individuals appealed against the decision by writing to the Commission. After some correspondence and discussions with the aggrieved parties and representatives of the Permit Committee, permits were eventually issued, but containing restrictions of the amounts of liquor that could be purchased for takeaway purposes (source: Licensing Commission and interviewee).

Since this initial phase, if an individual wishes to apply for a permit the following steps are taken:

- (i) A permit application form is collected from the Alyangula police (see example, Appendix 1)
- (ii) The application form is completed by the applicant
- (iii) If the applicant is resident in one of the Aboriginal communities, a letter from the Community Council is required to support the application.
- (iv) Police perform a criminal record check on all new permit applicants.
- (v) Any applicants with a criminal record or police record of concern (particularly if it involves alcohol-related offences, or violence) are discussed at the Permit Committee meeting with a view to determining the suitability and safety of applicants holding a permit. Others are checked by at least 2 committee members for any concerns, and if there are concerns the application is referred to the Permit Committee.
- (vi) A recommendation is sent to the Licensing Commission in Darwin, recommending granting or refusal of permits
- (vii) The Licensing Commission generally agrees with this recommendation and sends back to the police a letter granting or refusing the permit. There have been no cases where the

commission has disagreed with the committee's recommendation on individuals, but one case where it overruled a Permit Committee decision to license an outdoor event (source: Chair of Permit Committee).

- (viii) At the time of writing, the applicant collects their approval letter from the Licensing Commission from the Alyangula Police station. When permits are refused a representative of the police is given the duty of delivering the letter, explaining the reasons for refusal and the right of appeal.

This system for notification on permit decisions has varied since the Alcohol Management System commenced. At one stage letters about permits were posted direct to the applicant, however there were reports of letters going missing, or the Permit Committee not receiving a copy, and of at least one individual not realising his/her takeaway rights had been cancelled until trying to purchase takeaway alcohol at the licensed premises.

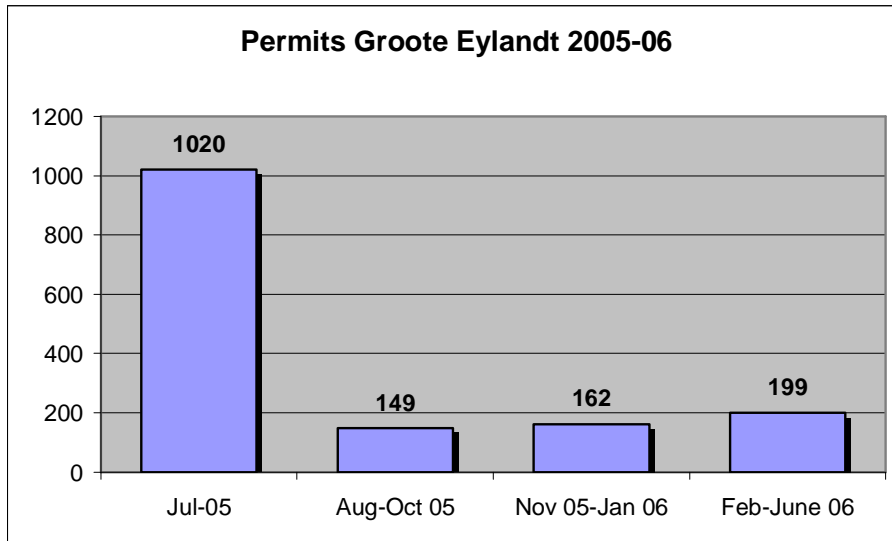
The Permit Committee membership includes representatives of those agencies suggested in the Licensing Commission decision. However in practice, membership varies, and more than one person has been allowed to represent one agency or community. On these occasions it has been the practice that this agency or community would still hold only one vote.

Number of permits issued and revoked

At the commencement of the System in July 2005, a total of 1,020 annual permits were issued (Figure 2). Permits were then reapplied for and reissued each July. The rate of applications then remained fairly steady over the following year, with an average of 46 permits issued per month, with a minor peak of 95 in March 2006. From July 2006 to February 2007, 943 permits were issued for Groote Eylandt, including 27 for Angurugu and 11 for Bickerton Island and Umbakumba. Direct data were not kept or provided on what proportion of persons holding permits were Aboriginal. There is no database which records the applicant's Indigenous status; but interviews, including with Permit Committee members,

suggest approximately 12-20 Indigenous residents of Alyangula, 3-6 of Angurugu, and 20-30 of Umbakumba have permits.

Figure 2: Permits issued in the first year of the Alcohol Management System



Source: Racing, Gaming and Licensing Division, Department of Justice NT

There were 26 revocations in the first year (Table 3), mostly for 'antisocial behaviour' including disturbance or fighting. The next most common causes were given as supplying alcohol to non permit holders, consuming alcohol in a restricted area and other breaches of permit conditions (not specified). Data were not available on the number of permits revoked that were of Aboriginal persons, though several Permit Committee members mentioned that some of the first permits revoked were of non-Aboriginal persons.

Table 3: Reasons for revocation of permits

	2005-6	2006-7
	<i>N</i>	<i>N</i>
<i>Breach of conditions (inc breaches that were not fully specified)</i>		
Breach of permit conditions (not specified)	2	0
Antisocial behaviour, breached permit conditions	4	0
“Breached conditions of the permit”; no longer resides in Alyangula	1	0
Drinking liquor in a restricted area	1	0
<i>Fight/violence:</i>		
At a licensed premises	4	0
In a public place	0	1
Domestic violence	0	2
<i>Disturbance/Intoxication</i>		
Alcohol-related disturbance	4	0
Public intoxication	1	0
Intoxicated, disturbance, antisocial behaviour on licensed premises, +/- failure to quit when told to leave	3	2
<i>Supply/“inadequate supervision” of non permit holders</i>		
To non permit holder	1	4
To juveniles	1	1
in restricted area	1	2
to Angurugu residents (non-permit holders) on visit to his accommodation	1	0
Inadequately supervising guest at social function, who then assaulted his wife (revoked for one month only)	1	0
Revocation requested due to new job	1	0
Total	26	13

Impacts of the System

Impact on violence, fighting and crime

Interviewee feedback on the impact on violence and arguments

Interviewees who lived on Groote Eylandt both before and after the implementation of the Alcohol Management System, and who had a significant level of contact with the Aboriginal communities, reported a marked improvement in community function and harmony, and a reduction of fighting, particularly in Angurugu. Interviewee feedback was unanimous on the improvement in community function and harmony in Angurugu. Improvements were also reported by some interviewees from Umbakumba (see below). Many interviewees also reported improvements in community harmony in Alyangula.

Angurugu: All interviewees agreed that Angurugu experienced a marked improvement since the introduction of the Alcohol Management System. In particular there was less fighting and arguments and greater harmony:

“Before, the argument was finished, buried. When they drink they think back on bad things, start to talk, spread rumours. Fights and arguments start again.” [ID 25, Indigenous woman, Angurugu]

Several interviewees mentioned that fewer spears and other weapons were now being carried in public.

All female interviewees reported that Angurugu was safer now for women and children. They also stressed the importance of providing good role models for children:

“Before, there was violence. Women scared, children scared. Children growing up seeing violence. Then when they grow up, they think ‘If it is alright for my father, why shouldn’t I do that?’ [ID 37, Indigenous woman, Angurugu]

“Before kids suffering, teenagers suffering, wives suffering, partners suffering... teaching younger men into alcohol” [ID 45, Indigenous woman, Angurugu]

The severity of the violence was commented on by a number of individuals:

“When a man was hurting a woman, the police were not here. They were in Alyangula. By the time they arrive, the woman might be dead” [ID 25, Indigenous woman, Angurugu]

Others also noted instances where considerable sums of money were being spent on alcohol:

“The fighting was with weapons, guns. ... If the man’s drinking, mother playing cards – no money for food; the children are starving.” [ID 25, Indigenous woman, Angurugu]

Many interviewees mentioned that the women of the larger Aboriginal communities (Angurugu and Umbakumba) were a driving force in dealing with problems stemming from alcohol:

[Before the permit system there were] “People fighting. Women not safe, children not safe... this is what the women decided. We wanted something better for our families, education for our children” [ID 29, Indigenous woman, Angurugu]

The women and a number of men, particularly the more senior council members, were adamant that they did not want the current Alcohol Management system changed. Several women expressed anxiety that the System might be changed without consultation.

In contrast to the consistent reports of decreased violence from Indigenous female community members, those agencies dealing directly with domestic violence (clinic, police and domestic violence officers) reported that incidents of domestic violence coming to their attention had not reduced greatly. But while alcohol was previously the most common reason for violence, now cannabis (sometimes paranoia related to its use, but more often attempts to get money for cannabis or resulting from cannabis itself) or other reasons were the commonest factors. Alcohol was now only a sporadic cause. One interviewee from Angurugu estimated that alcohol was now a factor in perhaps one in ten cases. Where the

offender was still in the house when police arrived, one interviewee reported that without alcohol intoxication they were easier to calm down.

Umbakumba: There was some disagreement on the extent to which the Alcohol Management System had impacted on Umbakumba. Several community members felt that the benefits in Umbakumba were experienced some months *before* the Alcohol Management System came in place, and related more to the transfer of responsibility for control of the alcohol ration to the women of the community. Other key stakeholders reported that the permit system had reduced entry of other (non ration) alcohol into the community and further improved the situation:

“Before, Balanda or Aboriginal people were bringing alcohol in.” [ID 9, Indigenous man, Umbakumba]

This view was supported by a police report of a death related to illicit alcohol in Umbakumba. A view was expressed by one key stakeholder that both the Alcohol Management System and the discussions leading up to it had reinforced the authority of the women who control the ration system.

However all interviewees agreed that at present the community was far calmer, more harmonious, and more productive, compared with earlier years when alcohol had been available.

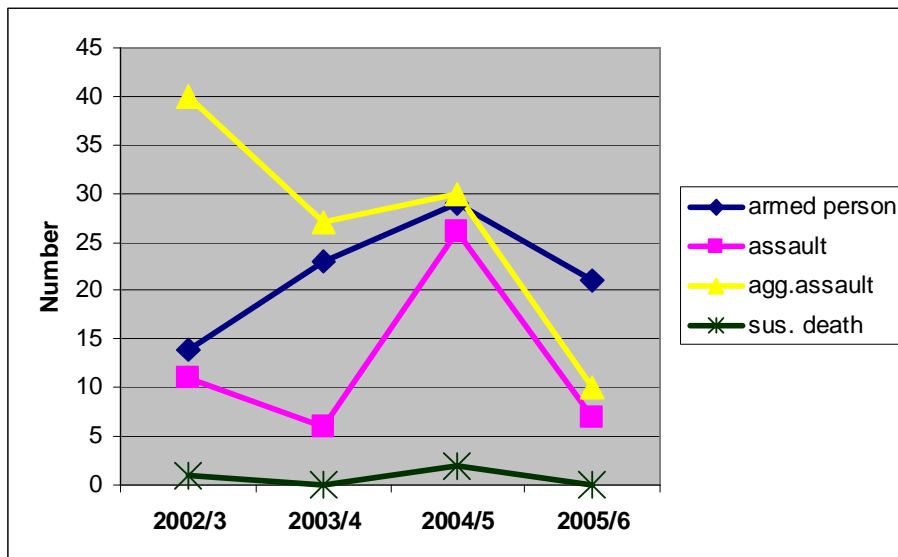
Bickerton: Community members in Milyakburra reported that their community had always been dry, and that alcohol caused few problems even before the implementation of the Alcohol Management System. When alcohol did enter the community, it was generally from the mainland rather than from Groote Eylandt. They had not noticed a difference since the Alcohol Management System came into place.

Smaller communities and outstations: We had limited opportunity to collect data from outstations, but one resident from Malkala, located just outside Alyangula, reported that the community had benefited greatly from the new system, in particular there was less fighting.

Quantitative data on impacts on violence and other disruption

According to police records, incidents involving assault and the more serious offence of aggravated assault fell dramatically between 2004-05 and 2005-06 (Figure 3), by 67% and 73% respectively. The number of incidents in 2005-06 involving aggravated assault was the lowest since 2002-03, and for assault, the second lowest. These reductions were despite changes in the reporting of violent offences, introduced with the Violent Crime Reduction Strategy in early 2005, which resulted in a Territory-wide increase in reporting of assault and domestic violence (source: Northern Territory Government).

Figure 3: Violent incidents coming to the attention of police, Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Islands, 2002-06

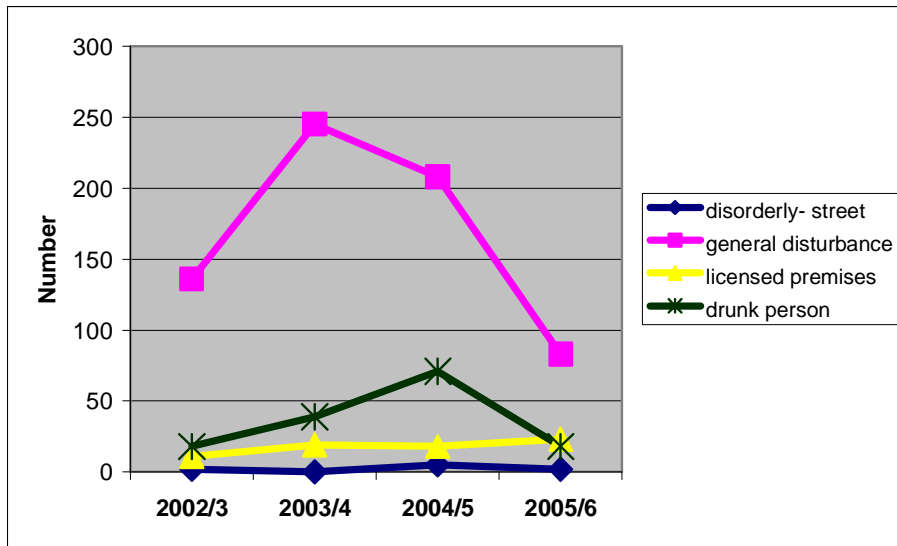


Agg. assault = aggravated assault; sus. death = suspicious death

Source: data from Alyangula police

There was also a marked reduction in disturbances, which fell 60% from 2004-05 to 2005-06 (Figure 4). These 2005-06 figures were the lowest in the past 4 years, being 40% lower than in 2002-03. Public drunkenness fell by 75% from 2004-05 to 2005-06, returning to levels comparable with those in 2002-03.

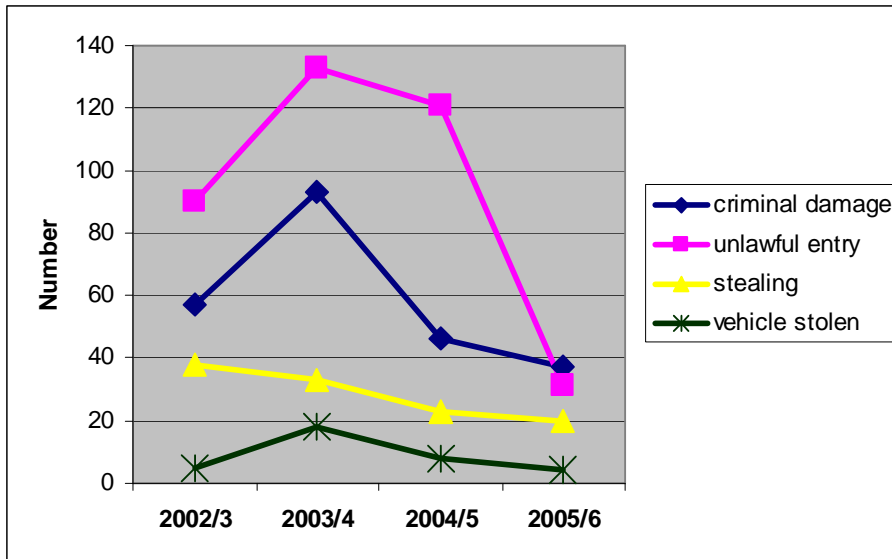
Figure 4: Non violent incidents in the street and licensed premises coming to the attention of the police, Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island, 2002-06



Source: data from Alyangula police

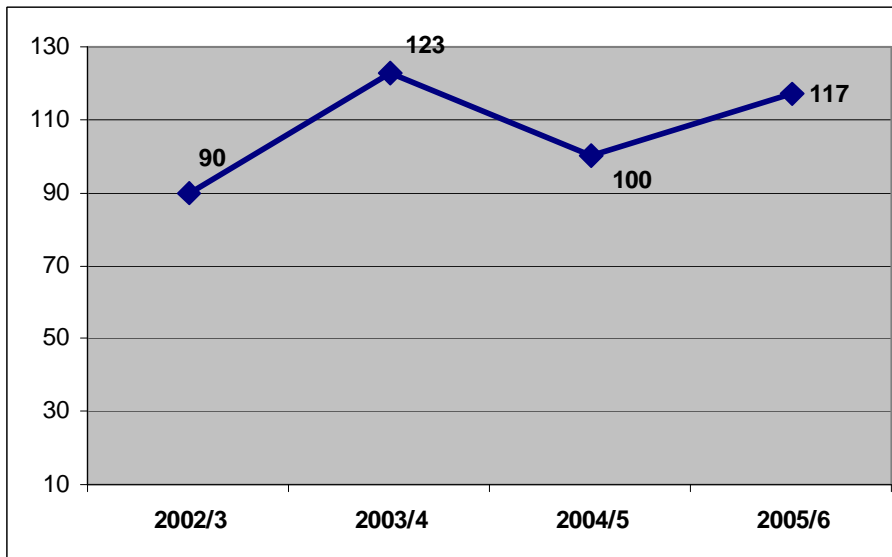
There was also a marked fall in incidents coming to the attention of police in relation to harms to property (Figure 5). In particular, there was a 74% reduction in incidents of unlawful entry. However police point out that other factors impacted on this reduction, such as successful prosecution of offenders and education conducted with householders about the need to lock up alcohol supplies. Indeed, the chief reduction in criminal damage occurred before the introduction of the Alcohol Management System, but there were further small reductions in this and in thefts between 2004-05 and 2005-06.

Figure 5: Incidents involving property offences which came to the attention of the police, Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island, 2002-06



Source: data from Alyangula police

Figure 6: Incidents of domestic disturbances coming to the attention of the police, Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island, 2002-06



Note: The term “domestic disturbance” includes both violent and non-violent incidents

Source: data from Alyangula police

In contrast to the decrease in incidents involving assault and property crimes there was no reduction in reported domestic disturbances (Figure 6). The 2005-06 figures were 17% higher than 2004-05, but below the peak in 2003-04. There

are a number of factors that suggest that this recent increase in police call outs to domestic violence could be due to increased reporting, rather than an increase in actual incidents:

- (a) The introduction of police ordered temporary restraining orders (Section 6A Domestic Violence Act) in February 2006 is likely to have encouraged reporting of domestic or family violence. This allowed immediate granting of restraining orders by police, instead of their having to contact a magistrate.

- (b) Over the past 10 years there has been considerable effort by several legal organisations in working with Indigenous women to address family violence in their communities. This has included strengthening reporting mechanisms.

- (c) The introduction of the Violent Crime Reduction Strategy in early 2005 resulted in changes to the operational and administrative procedures relating to the recording of violent offences; further, the Police also allocated additional resources to deal with personal and domestic violence. Reportedly as a consequence of these initiatives in 2005, there was a considerable increase in Police recording of assault and especially domestic violence related offences across the Northern Territory (source: Northern Territory Government).

In addition to these potential influences of increased reporting and increased proactive police patrols (see below), high levels of cannabis ('ganja') use in remote Arnhem Land communities¹⁰ are also reported by community members and key agencies alike to be a cause of violence. The violence occurs most often when an individual runs out of supplies. There have been ongoing police efforts to seize cannabis before it enters the communities, with reportedly increasing success in recent years.

Due to resource constraints, the local health clinics are not able to routinely collect data on the numbers of persons presenting with domestic violence or alcohol-related injuries.

The above data illustrate trends in incidents coming to the attention of the police. At any one incident the police are called to there can be one or more offences occurring, and one or more individuals may be apprehended or brought back to the police station. In other cases, no charges may be made. Offences are recorded where there is a prima facie case that a statutory event has occurred. Once an offence is determined to have occurred, the offender can be apprehended, which is when they are arrested or a summons is issued.

Table 4 – Recorded offences, Grootte Eylandt and Bickerton Islands, July 2004 to December 2006

	2004-05	2005-06	01/07/2006 to 31/12/2006	% Change 2004-05 to 2005-06
Offences Against the Person				
Murder	0	0	0	†
Attempted Murder	0	0	0	†
Manslaughter	1	0	0	†
Robbery	1	1	1	†
Assault	76	59	36	-22%
Sexual Assault	6	2	0	†
Other Offences Against the Person	4	5	3	†
Total	88	67	40	-24%
Property Offences				
House Break-ins	84	12	16	-86%
Commercial Break-ins	53	25	6	-53%
Motor Vehicle Theft and Related Offences	13	6	6	-54%
Other Theft	81	39	9	-52%
Property Damage	97	73	42	-25%
Other Property Offences	3	5	1	†
Total	331	160	80	-52%

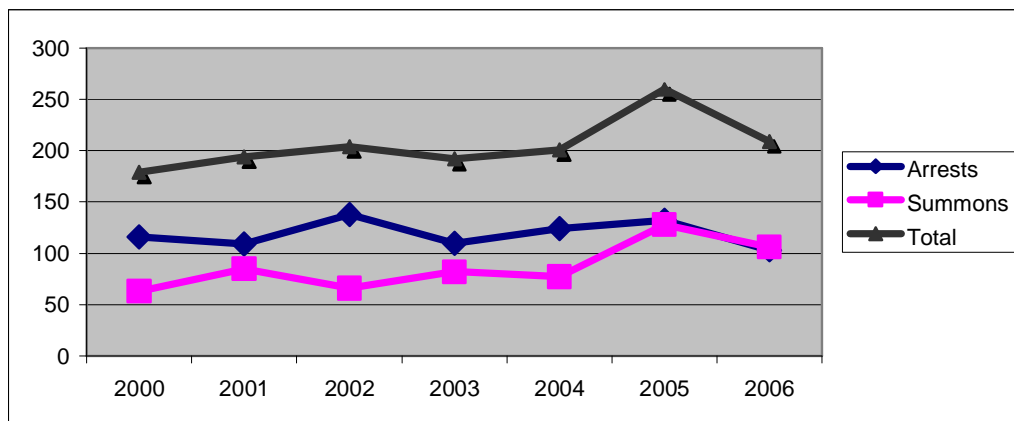
Data provided via NT Government. Data from July 2002-June 2004 were not available to the authors.

† Percentage reduction is not calculated where largest number is less than 10.

The number of recorded offences fell between 2004-05 and 2005-06 (Table 4). In particular there was a 22% reduction in assault, an 86% reduction in House Break-ins and more than a 50% reduction in each of Commercial Break-Ins, Motor Vehicle Theft and Related Offences, and Other Theft. For some offences, including property damage and assault, if figures for the June to December 2006 were simply extrapolated, these might suggest some increase back towards 04-05 offence figures. However this approach is not realistic, because of the high likelihood of seasonable variation in offence rates.

Summary data on alcohol-related apprehensions in the Groote Eylandt Local Statistical Area^a was supplied by the NT Police (Figure 7). There was a slight increase in total alcohol-related arrests and summons in 2005, followed by a reduction in 2006. The 2006 alcohol-related arrests fell to levels comparable with the lowest since 2000.

Figure 7: Number of alcohol-related apprehensions (arrest or summons), Groote Eylandt Statistical District, 2000-06



Source: IJIS (Integrated Justice Information System) NT Police. Note that IJIS data include charges, and more than 1 person can be charged at the same incident.

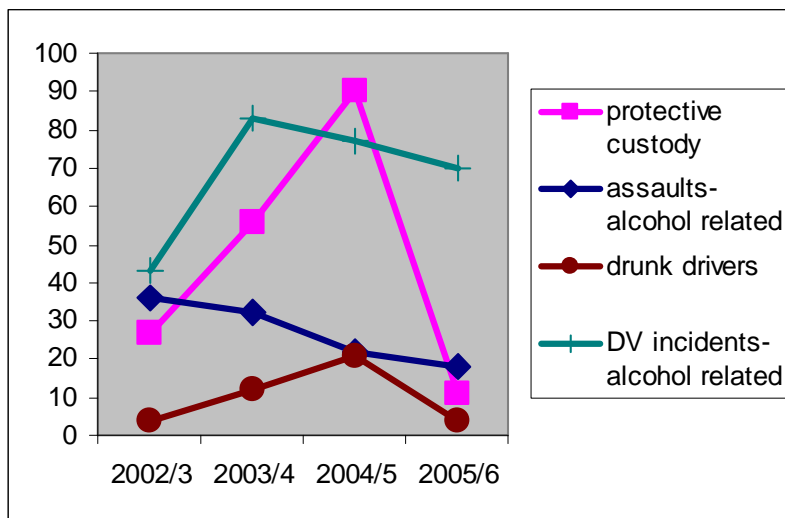
There was a consistent reduction in alcohol-related incidents from 2004-5 to 2005-6. The number of persons placed in protective custody fell dramatically from 90 in 2004-05 to only 11 in 2005-06 (Figure 8). While 2004-05 was a year with a particularly high number of persons in protective custody, the 2005-06 figure was

^a The Groote Eylandt statistical area includes Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Islands, and the nearby usually uninhabited Bustard and Connexion Islands.

a four year low. There was also a slight reduction in alcohol-related domestic violence incidents, alcohol-related assaults and in apprehensions for drink driving (Figure 8).

The number of reported sexual assaults in the Groote Eylandt region was small, with one in 2001 and in 2003, three in 2005 and two in 2006 (data not shown, source NT Police via NT Department of Justice). There were no murders recorded since 2001, and only one manslaughter, in 2002.

Figure 8: Number of alcohol-related events, Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island, 2002-06



Source: Data from IJIS & PROMIS Police database reports, via Alyangula Police

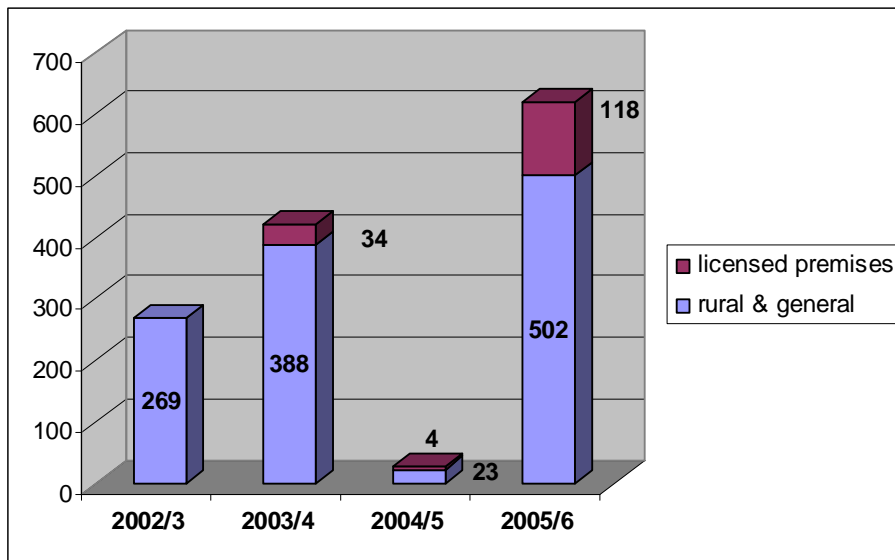
Police officers report that the reduction of violence and other alcohol-related incidents has significantly increased their time available for proactive patrols (Figure 9). This was achieved despite the lowest expenditure on overtime in the past 4 years. Spending on police overtime was 30% lower in 2005-06 compared with the previous 12 months, and the 2005-06 expenditure was the lowest since 2002-03. However any increases in baseline police staffing will also have reduced overtime expenditure.

Youth apprehensions

The data obtained from NT Police on youth apprehensions on Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island were aggregated for the periods August 2000 to June 2005,

and for July 2005 to April 2007. There were 187 apprehensions for the first period of 59 months and 50 for the second period of 21 months. These figures must be interpreted cautiously, but suggest that the average has fallen slightly from 3.2 to 2.4 apprehensions per month.

Figure 9: Police proactive patrols Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island, 2000-06



NB: the particularly low level of active patrols in 2004-05 may reflect problems with data entry

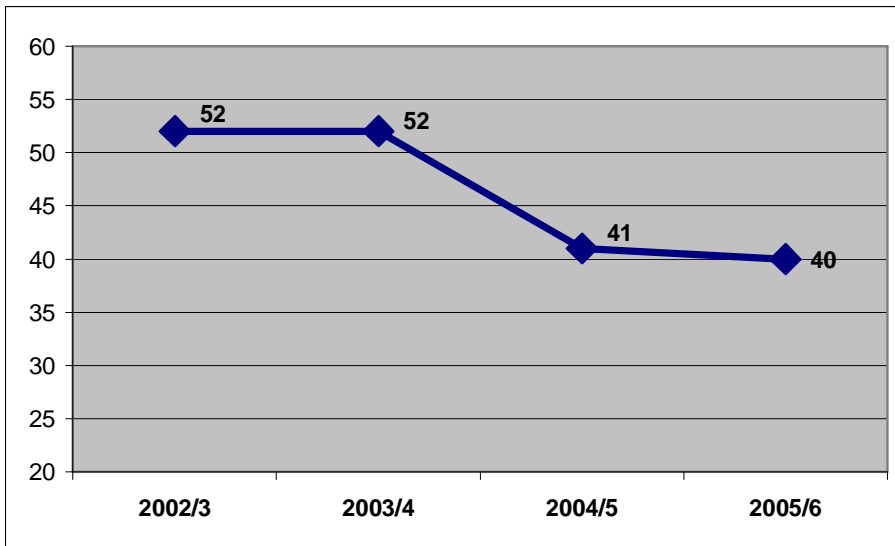
Source: data from Alyangula police

Imprisonments and conditional liberty order commencements

The term ‘conditional liberty order’ covers home detention, probation and parole and community work orders. There were marked reductions in both persons imprisoned and in the numbers of conditional liberty orders commenced from mid 2005 onwards. The number of adults admitted to correctional centres from Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island was the lowest in 2005-06 that it has been since 2002-03, with figures 23% lower than the 2002-04 figures (Figure 10).

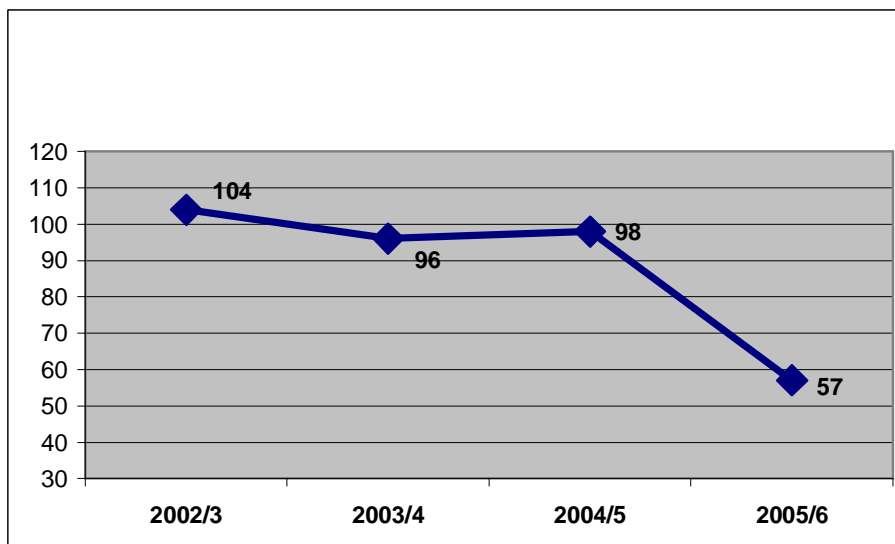
The number of conditional liberty order commencements (both juvenile and adult) dropped by 42% from 2005 to 2006 (source: Community corrections). The 2005-06 number of commencements on such orders was just over half (55%) that of 2002-03 (Figure 11) (source: Community corrections).

Figure 10: Number of admissions of adult prisoners from the Groote Eylandt region received in NT Correctional Centres



source: www.nt.gov.au/justice/ocp/graphpages/stats.shtml (table 19)

Figure 11: Conditional liberty order commencements, Groote Eylandt region



source: www.nt.gov.au/justice/ocp/graphpages/stats.shtml (table 32)

Impact on community engagement with work, education or other directed activities

Several interviewees (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) from Angurugu reported that the community had started to focus on long-term goals such as wanting better education for their children or getting into the workforce. Some families

reported there being more money for food and clothes for children. More men were reported to be hunting or fishing:

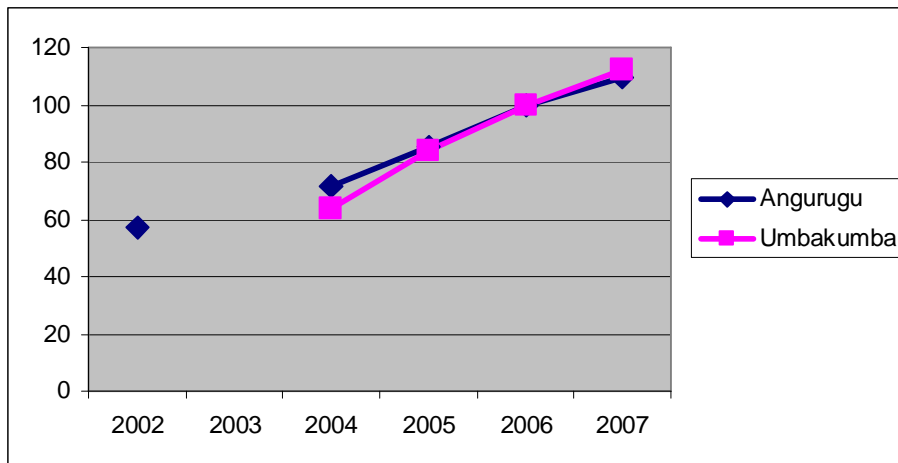
“Since the alcohol has stopped, the men who used to be drinkers and used to be violent are going hunting. Taking their children hunting. Getting good food.” [ID 34, Indigenous woman, Angurugu]

The health clinic reported some early indications of a slight increase in people attending routine health checks, though there were also other initiatives targeting chronic disease that may have encouraged these.

More Aboriginal people were said to be employed or on CDEP. While selected individuals had returned to work because they were no longer drinking heavily, several interviewees perceived the increased work participation was more often related to increased community stability.

Estimates of CDEP enrolment and attendance provided by community government council employees suggest that participation at both Angurugu and Umbakumba has steadily increased in the past 3-5 years (Figure 12). This

Figure 12: Estimated numbers attending CDEP in the two larger Aboriginal communities, Angurugu and Umbakumba, 2002-07



Note: Separate attendance figures were not available for Angurugu for each year. Overall it was estimated attendance had consistently been 95-105 percent of those enrolled. For this graph, we have assumed 95% attendance of those enrolled throughout, which will have underestimated attendance somewhat.

increase commenced before the introduction of the Alcohol Management System and has continued since.

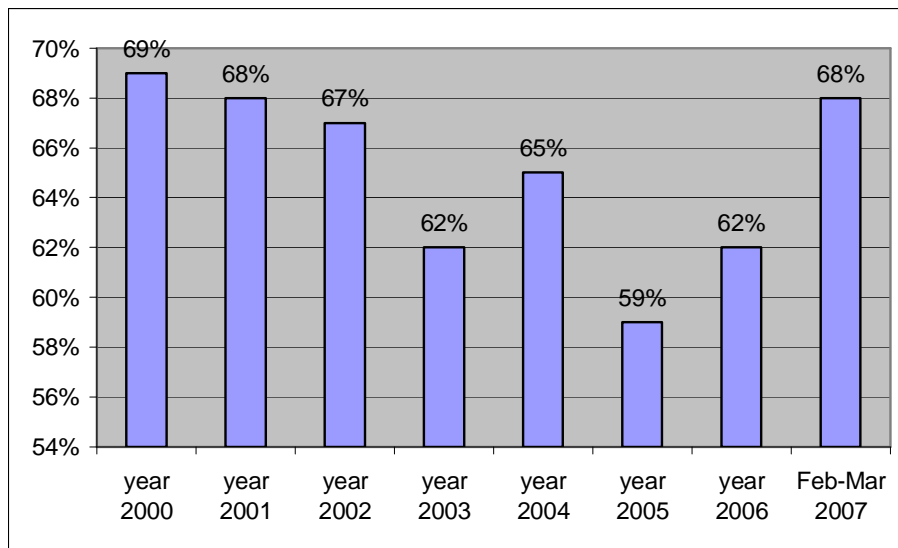
Work attendance was also said to have improved among the Indigenous employees of the GEMCO mine rehabilitation team after the introduction of the Alcohol Management System, with absenteeism dropping to a quarter of its previous level - from 7.8% in the 12 months leading up to 1st July 2005 to 2.4% for the subsequent 12 months. No data were available on the attendance rate of non-Indigenous employees, but it was verbally reported that attendance for that group was not a problem before the Alcohol Management System and that attendance had not changed greatly.

The benefits of reduced time spent on drinking on relationships and activities were not felt by Indigenous people alone. One interviewee reported that a non-Indigenous person from Alyangula had expressed great appreciation for the System because it had changed his/her spouse's life. This spouse had previously been a hidden dependent drinker.

School attendance

The majority of interviewees did not believe there had been significant improvements in school attendance following the introduction of the Alcohol Management System. Annual figures for school attendance indicate a trough in attendance in 2005 (59%) with a slight (3 percentage points) increase in 2006 (Figure 13). The figures for the first quarter of 2007 are promising with an increase to 68% attendance, but should be interpreted cautiously. School attendance in the Indigenous communities alone was 10-15% lower than for the above region-wide figures, and similarly showed a trough in attendance in 2005, with a suggestion of an increase since then. The slight increase in attendance from 2005 will have been influenced not only by changes in levels of community stability but also by a range of initiatives which have been trialled to increase attendance.

Figure 13: Average annual school attendance rates, across all schools on Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island



Source: Dept of Employment, Education and Training (DEET), NT Government

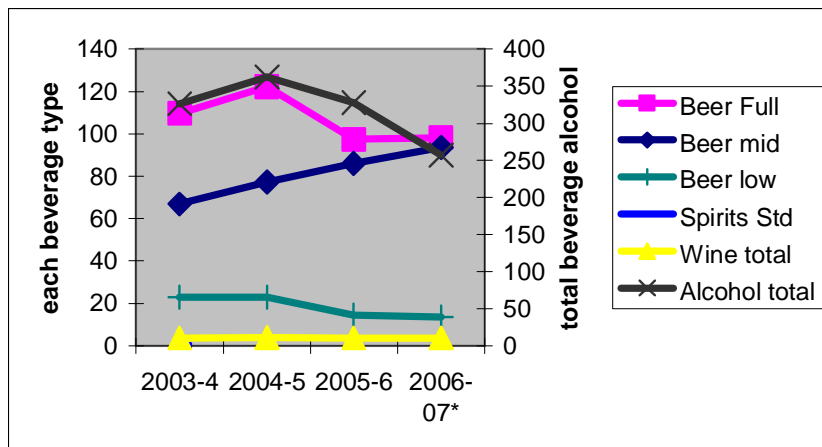
Impact on access to alcohol

All interviewees agreed that there was decreased access to and availability of alcohol generally, but particularly in the Indigenous communities (though with the possible exception of Milyakburra which already had very little access).

Consistent with these reports, one licensed premises reported that sales of Melbourne Bitter (a popular brand in the Aboriginal communities) dropped by 50% when the permit system was first introduced.

Data provided from the NT Registered wholesalers and supplied by the Licensing Commission show that overall there was a relatively small (9%) reduction in volume of beverage alcohol sold by the licensed premises on Groote Eylandt between 2004-05 and 2005-06. The chief reduction was in sales of heavy beer which decreased by 20% from 2004-05 to 2005-06. This was partly offset by an 11% increase in mid-strength beer sales (Figure 14). However if the sales of the first 9 months of the 2006-07 financial year continue at their current level, there will have been a 28% reduction in the total volume of beverage alcohol sold between 2004-05 and 2006-07.

Figure 14: Wholesales volume in thousands of litres of beer, wine and spirits for Groote Eylandt, 2003-07



Source: Racing, Gaming and Licensing Division, Department of Justice NT. Note that these figures do not include alcohol brought in by barge or charter plane. *The figures for 2006-07 are extrapolated from the July 2006 to March 2007 period.

Impact on persons leaving the communities

A number of members of the Aboriginal communities indicated that when people want to drink, they have to fly to the mainland, typically Darwin, Gove, or Borroloola. Several men and an occasional woman in the Aboriginal communities complained that this was an expensive way to drink. The duration of drinking trips reportedly varies from a weekend, to three weeks, up to a year. Several Indigenous interviewees (particularly women) reported that it is better that people leave the communities when they want to drink.

At least one female interviewee mentioned that it sometimes puts strains on relationships when one person leaves their partner behind to go and drink for a few weeks, and either partner might become suspicious of infidelity. It was reported that generally if children are left behind they are cared for by relatives, though occasional exceptions to this were reported by one interviewee.

A number of non-Indigenous and Indigenous interviewees mentioned the difficulties certain individuals faced getting home again when they are away drinking, as some leave Groote Eylandt on a one way ticket.

One non-Indigenous and one Indigenous key stakeholder commented on problems observed in the mainland airports or on planes with intoxicated travellers returning from the mainland and being disruptive on the plane. There were also isolated reports of drinkers causing disruption on their return to the communities after drinking, but most community members reported the person returning after drinking was just “sick” or just wanted to sleep.

A number of Indigenous men from Angurugu and Umbakumba said that they would like to be able “to have a beer after work”. In the case of Umbakumba, they would like to have it in their home; in the case of Angurugu, no Aboriginal interviewees felt that drinking in the community was a good idea, but a few said they would like to be allowed to drink in the club (see below). Others only wanted access for special occasions.

Persons leaving semi-permanently

A number of Aboriginal community interviewees reported that several individuals or families had left Angurugu or Umbakumba semi-permanently because they could no longer get alcohol. They now lived in places like Darwin or Gove, sometimes in homes, sometimes in the “long grass”. There was lack of agreement on how many families had left Groote Eylandt permanently because of lack of access to alcohol following the introduction of the Alcohol Management System. Generally interviewees estimated this was a relatively small number and the majority of Indigenous interviewees did not feel that it was not a problem for the community that these drinkers had left.

Drinkers often return for funerals, often unwell. Some, after a day or two, develop the “grog shakes”, and then go back to the mainland to drink. Others “sit and wait, and it gets better” [ID 50, Indigenous man, Milyakburra]. Few seek treatment.

One Indigenous interviewee felt that an occasional drinker would like to stop drinking but cannot, and more outreach help should be made available on the mainland to help those drinkers who wanted to stop.

Three Darwin-based residential rehabilitation services were asked if they had observed any change in admissions for alcohol problems from the Groote Eylandt region. The Council for Aboriginal Alcohol Program Services (CAAPS), the Foundation of Rehabilitation with Aboriginal Alcohol Related Difficulties (FORWAARD) and the Salvation Army Bridge program. These services did not have data available on the admissions' place of residence, but none had noticed a change in admissions from the Groote Eylandt region since 2005. FORWAARD and the Salvation Army Bridge program reported that they usually have few admissions per year from Groote Eylandt.

Illicit supply or possession of alcohol

Police reported that alcohol seizures have increased since the introduction of the Alcohol Management System. The process of tracing the origin of illegally supplied alcohol has been facilitated by the system of recording all alcohol purchases against each permit number. Police also report that there is now greater clarity on who is eligible and ineligible to be in possession of takeaway alcohol, whereas previously a person could argue that they were taking the alcohol between two "wet" areas, and not really taking alcohol into a "dry" Aboriginal community.

Several non-Indigenous key stakeholders reported that sometimes women are put under considerable pressure to smuggle alcohol into the community:

"They are forced to do smuggling, and if caught are beaten [by their partners] and punished by the [non-Indigenous] law." [ID 39, Indigenous woman, Alyangula]

Concerns were expressed by a small number of female Indigenous interviewees about their bags being searched by male police officers, but more importantly in their view, when their luggage was searched in front of male relatives. This was a "shame job". The police have indicated that wherever a female staff member is available, searches of luggage belong to women are performed by the female officer, but this is not always possible. A screened area has now been set up at the airport to provide for greater privacy during searches.

Several interviewees had seen or heard of liquor seizures, particularly at the airport, since the introduction of the new system. Several Indigenous interviewees expressed concerns that police checks of bags for alcohol at the airport were discriminatory as they only targeted Indigenous persons. However the police state that all non-permit holders are searched if there is suspicion of alcohol coming into the community, but at present more Aboriginal people are non-permit holders than are non-Aboriginal.

A number of interviewees reported that the black market in alcohol continues, with a carton of alcohol still selling for around \$100. However the amount of alcohol getting into the Aboriginal communities has greatly reduced. One Indigenous woman indicated that when a small amount of alcohol does get smuggled into the Aboriginal community, people drink it quietly at home to avoid detection.

Impact on harassment or “humbug” from persons seeking alcohol

Many interviewees commented that the new system had greatly reduced the large amount of “humbug” that was previously experienced by persons with access to alcohol in Alyangula. This was a particular problem for Aboriginal people with access to takeaway alcohol, who previously were experiencing unrelenting pressure to provide alcohol, even if they consistently refused. Several interviewees reported that before the introduction of the Alcohol Management System they would be woken repeatedly in the middle of the night by people asking for money for alcohol or for transport back to the community after drinking. This was now an unusual occurrence.

Impact on other substance use

A proportion of interviewees reported some increases in cannabis smoking when the Alcohol Management System was initially implemented. There were a few reports of increases in petrol sniffing, but there was disagreement as to whether these increases were linked to reduced availability of alcohol. Most interviewees believed that sniffers were a different group from those who had previously consumed alcohol regularly.

Understanding of the System

While there was in general good understanding of the Alcohol Management System by Permit Committee members and by members of the Land Council and Community Councils who were interviewed, there was highly variable understanding among general Aboriginal community members who were interviewed, particularly in Angurugu and Milyakburra. Many were not aware of a permit system, even when the details were described carefully. These community members were unaware of the existence of a permit assessment committee, or of the steps that needed to be taken to apply for a permit.

In Umbakumba some of the men knew about the permit system and reported they had been assisted to apply for permits in order to allow the continuance of the beer ration early in 2005.

Perceived fairness of the System

The majority of interviewees in the Aboriginal communities who were aware of the details of the Alcohol Management System were satisfied with the way it was designed and implemented. However in Angurugu in particular, a number of drinkers interviewed expressed the strong view that the System is discriminatory. On the other hand they did acknowledge the substantial gains to their community since the implementation of the Alcohol Management System and their Council's backing of the plan. On questioning, the commonest reason for feeling the System was discriminatory was that they, as Angurugu residents, could not drink at the club. However, restriction to club membership was not brought in with the recent Alcohol Management System but is based on the longer standing decision (from 1989) by community members to stop their residents drinking at the club. A similar source of concern and apparent confusion was seen in at least one male drinker at Milyakburra.

There was a small number of Indigenous interviewees from Angurugu who wanted to be able to drink at a friend's house in Alyangula or at a special occasion at the club in Alyangula, but were not aware that there was a system for seeking permission for this.

A number of male drinkers from Umbakumba expressed a desire to “be able to have a cold beer after work here in Umbakumba”, [ID 55, Indigenous men] but on the other hand they agreed that the community was more peaceful without alcohol.

One interviewee commented that that system appeared to be fair, and that:

“The first two people to lose their permits were white people. This shook people up. They thought it was just for the Aboriginal people” [ID 14, non-Indigenous woman, Alyangula]

Feedback and suggestions on Permit Committee function

There was widespread agreement both within the Permit Committee and beyond that there need to be clear guidelines developed to help the Committee make consistent and defensible permit decisions, and that these criteria should be made available to the whole community. It was noted that some of the decisions to be made can be challenging, for example, should a person with a past severe alcohol problem have “another chance” at being able to drink? One community member strongly felt this should not be the case, even if a limit was set to the amount of takeaways they could buy:

“If the men have some alcohol, it will not be enough. They will try to get hard beer from Wurramangkadirra [non-Indigenous people] ... if they cause problems again, it is the women and children who will get hurt” [ID 34, Indigenous woman, Angurugu]

The majority of committee members interviewed suggested there should be guidelines for committee decisions. It was proposed that the Liquor Commission could support the process of developing guidelines. Concern was expressed both by committee members and other interviewees that there was lack of clarity or predictability in decisions made by the Permit Committee, for example on “which transgressions lead to which consequences”. One committee member was concerned that:

“Lack of guidelines leaves the committee vulnerable” [ID 14, non-Indigenous woman, Alyangula]

The lack of administrative support to enable formation of a Permit Committee database makes it harder to keep a record of past decisions, and to maintain consistency among decisions. The limited administrative support available to the committee was noted by several committee members. Support currently has to be provided by a police staff member in addition to routine duties. Committee members also are all busy and often have full time employment in addition to their role on the Permit Committee.

Several interviewees (police, some committee members and some other non-Indigenous interviewees) mentioned that the police may not be the ideal agency to chair the Permit Committee. One interviewee saw a potential conflict of interest in having police chairing the Permit Committee. A small number of other interviewees expressed the view that a police chair contributed to the public perception that the alcohol permit system is a method of policing, rather than a community driven initiative:

“We mustn’t lose sight of the fact that the Aboriginal people are driving this. They wanted this.” [ID 10, non-Indigenous man, Alyangula]

There have reportedly been times where there has been lack of Aboriginal representation on the committee. A concern expressed by one individual was that if the committee were dominated by non-Indigenous representatives, both in number and in the amount spoken, that this would make it harder for Indigenous representatives to contribute, or to feel that their contribution is necessary. There was also a concern by another (non-Indigenous) committee member that perhaps Aboriginal committee members might be reluctant to attend and to be responsible for adverse decisions made against friends or relatives. This concern was not volunteered by the two Aboriginal committee members interviewed. A female Indigenous community member from Angurugu volunteered that she or other “strong women” would have no difficulty sitting on the committee.

Practical challenges in the administrative function of the permit system

Challenges identified by non-Indigenous interviewees included:

- Currently if a permit is revoked the drinker can reapply immediately. However, in practice when the drinker reapplies the Permit Committee is

likely to recommend against a permit, based on the criteria set out in the Licensing Decision (p.33).

- The annual reapplication for permits each July was reported to be time consuming administratively. A renewal system was suggested as an alternative, with one interviewee suggesting longer duration permits for those with good records, of up to five years.
- Permits are currently granted off site in Darwin following the recommendations of the Permit Committee. This can lead to lengthy delays, particularly if communications falter between the Permit Committee and Racing, Gaming and Licensing. This can cause considerable angst for community members and also reflects badly on the Permit Committee. More than one interviewee recommended that the right to issue permits be transferred to the Permit Committee.

Concerns or suggestions about the Alcohol Management System expressed by Alyangula interviewees and survey respondents

Concern was expressed by Alyangula interviewees that it is no longer possible to drink outdoors at most locations, alcohol is no longer permitted at the annual Picnic Day celebrations, and visiting dignitaries are ineligible to drink on the golf course, as they do not usually have a permit.

Currently if an official function is held and alcohol is involved, a nominated permit holder has to take responsibility for the drinking behaviour of any non permit holders. This can mean that an individual in their work capacity has to risk losing their personal permit for takeaway alcohol, should a non-permit holding colleague cause trouble after drinking alcohol at a work function.

Concern was expressed by selected non-Indigenous interviewees that the System was to a certain extent being used by the police as a “system of social control” more broadly, and not just to manage alcohol.

Surveys of community acceptance of the System in the township of Alyangula

Two attempts were made to survey Alyangula community members' views on the Alcohol Management System.

i) GEMCO survey:

GEMCO undertook a survey of all residents in March 2007 which included 2 items on the Alcohol Management System. A response rate of 16% (106 respondents) was achieved.

While this response rate is too low to be confident that the responses are generalisable, of those who did respond, 72% felt the implementation of the Liquor Management Plan had been good or very good.

Practical suggestions for improvements were for permits to be like a driver's licence in appearance and for automatic permit renewal for compliant individuals. While some respondents would have liked to reduce the number of restricted areas on Groote Eylandt, others sought harsher penalties for breaches, or a total ban on alcohol.

ii) Independent postal survey:

As part of the current evaluation, a further survey of residents of Alyangula took place in late April 2007. Every household received an envelope in their post office box containing an information sheet, a 3 page survey and a reply paid envelope. An article publicising the survey featured in the Groote Eylandt Echo. A small number of responses were received (44, 28 males, 16 females); mean age 45.4 years, mean length of residency on Groote Eylandt 6.5 years). All respondents indicated they were non-Indigenous except for one who was Indigenous and 4 respondents who did not answer this question.

The survey responses illustrate the diversity of views on the System, but because of the low response rate they cannot be taken to be representative of the broader Alyangula community. While the majority of the respondents were in favour of the permit system, it is possible that those who were not in favour did not bother

to respond. To obtain representative views would require either a phone survey or a door to door survey. A phone survey was not possible without release of private household phone numbers. It was not within the scope or funding of the current project to perform a door to door survey.

While there was a marked diversity of views, with some strongly in favour of the permit system and others wanting it abandoned, the majority of the comments were compatible with comments obtained in interview of key stakeholders.

Positive comments or suggestions from the survey included:

- “It’s made things better.... I used to worry about going out at night and leaving the house unattended”

Concerns or suggestions for improvement related to

- Practical issues with permit issue:
 - “The waiting period is very long”
 - “Permits to be processed and distributed on Island “
 - “The current permit is an A4 sheet of paper, it doesn’t last the year. Perhaps a laminated business card would be easier.”
- Concerns about lack of transparency or consistency of Permit Committee decisions:
 - “The Permit Committee requires a set of rules to guide their decision-making”
 - “The permit system needs to be transparent and open, with an appeal system. The committee should be democratically elected, not just representatives of interested bodies.”
- Need for education:
 - “Information should be given to people before coming to Island e.g. at airports, Perkins” (barge company)
- Desire to see more outdoor spaces identified as drinking areas:
 - “Maybe camping areas could be included as drinking areas”

Potential development of a similar system in other communities

Many interviewees expressed views on why the Alcohol Management System appears to have been effective in reducing alcohol-related harms on Groote Eylandt:

- Accountability: the permit system is enforced rigorously with significant and swift consequences for breaches
- The restrictions to the access of alcohol were initiated and endorsed by the community. Accordingly the System is backed and reinforced by the authority of local councils, elders and the strength of women in Umbakumba and Angurugu to introduce reductions in the supply of alcohol. This system is part of more than 20 years of efforts to tackle alcohol problems:

“[the System has] worked because it is community-based, community-driven. It’s got to be community-driven” [ID 30, non-Indigenous male, Alyangula]

- Considerable efforts in consultation and discussion were made in the formation of the System
- The System owes part of its success to the commitment and good will of the members of the Permit Committee, who give of their own time to attend meetings and administer the workings of the Liquor Management System
- The geographic isolation of Groote Eylandt, with lack of road access and only 2 liquor outlets, has made it easier to limit the entry of alcohol into the region than it might be for communities with road access

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Participants in interviews provided compelling reports of the benefits that have come to the Grootte Eylandt communities with the introduction of the Alcohol Management System. They report reducing fighting and violence in the Indigenous communities, particularly in those communities located closest to the licensed premises. There was universal agreement among those who had lived or worked in Angurugu before and after the introduction of the System, that there was a marked improvement in community harmony and reduction in fighting and other alcohol-related harms. Most interviewees also reported improvements in harmony in Umbakumba and in Alyangula, with less obvious benefits seen in the more isolated community of Milyakburra.

Routinely collected data shows marked reductions in persons being imprisoned and in the orders for community service or other conditional liberty orders. These benefits have been seen despite increased proactive policing patrols, which are likely to have increased the chance of detection of any crime. In addition, the Violent Crime Reduction Strategy and specific domestic violence prevention initiatives may have encouraged community reporting of offences. Accordingly the police data presented above may underestimate the benefits of the Alcohol Management System in reducing actual incidents of violence.

This Alcohol Management System arose out of community desire to address alcohol, and was developed in close consultation with communities and key agencies. The community members and other stakeholders involved in its development and implementation should be congratulated. Both these phases have involved much hard work, and the commitment of many individuals deserves acknowledgment. This task has had no external funding, and has been wholly absorbed by individuals into their already considerable routine workload.

The police in particular have absorbed many of the tasks involved in the operation of the Alcohol Management System into their routine duties, including community education about licensing decisions. However this leading police role has contributed to a perception by some individuals that the Alcohol Management System is being imposed by the police as a method of control, rather than being a

community initiative. Addressing these concerns is important to ensure the ongoing acceptance of the System and sustainability of the benefits gained.

There is general agreement that the Permit Committee needs funded administrative support; and that several practical issues need to be addressed, such as expediting the issuing of permits and introducing a more portable and durable permit. Given the likely regular turnover of committee members, and the potential for appointment of members new to Groote Eylandt, there also is a need for brief training for all new committee members. This could alert new members to the history and intent of the Alcohol Management System, the method of making decisions and also their confidentiality responsibilities. It would also ideally include brief practical education about the nature of alcohol problems, and in particular alcohol dependence. Some understanding of the intensity of craving and the phenomenon of priming (where one drink leads to an intense desire for another drink) in alcohol dependent individuals is likely to inform decision making. This education, in combination with Licensing Commission advice, would complement committee members' knowledge of individual applicants and of their own community. However given the time constraints that these volunteers face, training would have to be efficient.

It is not surprising given the newness of the System that there remain some concerns and practical challenges to be addressed. We found very little published information on similar systems around the world and we were unable to identify any evaluations of such. No published guide to implementation was available, apart from the Licensing Decision itself. Within the Northern Territory there are more than 100 General Restricted Areas in which access to alcohol is controlled.¹¹ Among some of these, individual permit holders may consume alcohol in an otherwise dry area. Perhaps the closest system is in the community of Maningrida (NT). In recent years, this community has had a system of individual permits controlled by a drug and alcohol committee (personal communication, interviewees). In Ngukurr community (NT) the permit system previously in place was apparently primarily for non-Indigenous residents and was abolished in mid-2005 as it was perceived by the community as discriminatory.¹¹

There seemed to be relatively low levels of awareness of the nature of the Alcohol Management System, its rules, and its interface with the rules relating to drinking in the licensed premises in the Aboriginal communities, particularly in Angurugu. This has contributed to a perception in some individuals that the System is being externally imposed by non-Aboriginal people and is discriminatory. It should be noted that this view was expressed by a minority of interviewees, and that in those interviewees, the accusations of discrimination appeared to be mainly based on a concern about lack of access to alcohol at the clubs- a decision made many years before the Alcohol Management System. However it is important that efforts be made to address this concern, so that resentment does not erode the gains made. Considerable thought should be put into how to provide appropriate education in a community with such recent major alcohol-related harms and the Community Council and Land Council should take a key role in guiding this process.

Several younger women interviewed for this project indicated some fear of speaking out on their support for the Alcohol Management System, even in individual, private interviews. They were anxious to remain anonymous to avoid the potential animosity of male drinkers. It will be important that any future evaluations or consultations in relation to alcohol management systems in remote communities provide the opportunity for women to speak privately and anonymously.

This evaluation has reported on benefits from the Alcohol Management System that have been apparent in the two years following its implementation. It will be valuable to have ongoing monitoring, not only of the effectiveness, but of the methods of implementation of the Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island Alcohol Management System in years to come.

The relative isolation of Groote Eylandt has made controlling the supply of alcohol easier than might be possible on some mainland communities. However there is widespread acknowledgement that a key ingredient of its success is the

ownership and support of the System by the Aboriginal communities and also by key local service providers and licensed premises.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations in relation to Permit Committee function

(Recommendations 1-4):

1. That financial and consultative support is provided by the Department of Justice to the alcohol Permit Committee to assist in developing further guidelines for decision making; to review committee membership, and to keep a database of decisions made. Any guidelines developed are likely to be useful to other communities seeking to develop similar systems
 - (a) That guidelines be developed for selecting representatives of communities or agencies to sit on the Permit committee, as well as for sending proxy or additional representatives.
2. That Aboriginal representation on the committee is encouraged and the comfort of Aboriginal participation in committee meetings regularly reviewed.
 - (a) Aboriginal participation is important in any decisions involving permits for Aboriginal people, so that the System is not seen as one imposed by non-Indigenous people and being potentially discriminatory. Strategies which could potentially improve Indigenous representation could include moving the meeting venue away from the police station into a community facility, avoiding undue growth in committee size, and maintaining ongoing consultation on this issue between Permit Committee members and representatives of the Land Council and Community Councils.
3. That the issue of the appropriate Chair of the Permit Committee be reviewed with Land Council, Community Councils and key agencies. If police continue to Chair the committee, the Alcohol Management System may increasingly be seen as an externally enforced police operation, rather than a community controlled function. However, a committee Chair with a suitable level of experience, ability, commitment and time availability

is required. Options include making the Chair of the committee a paid position.

4. That brief and practical training be developed for new committee members on the nature and history of the System; the basis of decision making; the nature of alcohol problems, including alcohol dependence; and on confidentiality requirements. This process should be supported and funded by the NT Department of Justice and provide a practical and sustainable method for providing training to new members on an ongoing basis. Any training should not impact unduly on the many other roles and responsibilities of committee members. For persons without extensive past experience in remote communities, brief training on working in committees in a cross cultural setting may also be useful.

Transparency of the System and community education

(Recommendations 5-11)

5. The basis for permit refusals or revocations should not only be provided to individual permit applicants, but the general criteria for decision making should be made readily available to the wider community.
6. For the non-Indigenous community, information about the Alcohol Management System can generally be provided through the print media (e.g. Groote Eylandt Echo, brochures) and online.
 - (a) This information should be available to temporary and longer stay visitors to the region, before their arrival.
 - (b) The role of the airlines in disseminating core information about the permit system at the time of ticket purchase, check-in and/or on boarding should be further explored.
7. For Indigenous community members, where skills in literacy vary, face-to-face small group, print or audio/visual education is likely to be necessary. Materials should include Anindilyakwa as well as English explanations.
8. That ongoing remedial community education be carefully designed and conducted, with the support (of expertise and funding) from the NT Liquor Licensing Commission/Department of Justice and in close consultation with Community Councils and Land Council.

9. Education of Aboriginal community members should be conducted judiciously, to avoid adverse effects, including strong pressure on council members to grant inappropriate permits for alcohol.
 - a. Such education could potentially be conducted together with a dissemination of the core results of this evaluation, which would allow the community to access a summary of the impact of the Alcohol Management System. Alternatively the education could occur when there is any modification or updating of the permit system, or when guidelines for decision making are released.
 - b. Education should include a reminder on the key phases of the history of the impact from alcohol on Groote Eylandt communities and the communities' responses to these alcohol-related harms. It also should include brief and practical education on the impact of alcohol on health and behaviour, including the nature of alcohol dependence.
10. Education should preferably be led by an agency other than police, to avoid the perception that the Alcohol Management System is part of regular police operations.
11. Education should take into account the issues of concern identified above.

Enforcement of the Alcohol Management System

(Recommendation 12)

12. Ongoing work is required with aviation operators, including charter plane companies, and with the barge company to reduce illegal importation of alcohol. Potential measures that could be discussed with airlines include:
 - a. Printed warning of the alcohol restrictions on tickets issued by airlines flying into Groote Eylandt, followed by consistent verbal warning at the point of check-in and/or boarding.
 - b. Encouraging airlines to review and where possible strengthen policies related to identifying and dealing with alcohol found in luggage of non-permit holders flying to Groote
 - c. Encouraging airlines to review policies and procedures for dealing with intoxicated patrons boarding planes.

- d. Ceasing of alcohol being served on flights heading to or from restricted areas.

Practical issues in relation to permit issue

(Recommendations 13-15)

- 13. Consideration be given to issue a laminated or plasticised, wallet card size permit, rather than (or in addition to) an A4 page of paper, as this would be more durable and practical to carry
 - a. Membership cards for the licensed clubs currently carry information about permit status. Consideration could be given to police recognition of a valid current club membership card that displays permit status alcohol as acceptable evidence of a permit.
- 14. That authority be granted to the Permit Committee to issue permits locally, rather than by RGL in Darwin, to expedite the process
- 15. Consideration be given to issuing permits for longer periods of time in persons who have no history of alcohol-related problems, and or in persons who have demonstrated an absence of alcohol-related problems when holding a permit. For example, initial permits could be for one year, but after five years without incident, permits could potentially be issued for two to five years at a time.
 - a. Systems for supervising groups of non-permit holders who are drinking under the supervision of a permit holder at official functions be carefully considered. It could be considered whether this responsibility should fall on the company responsible for the group, rather than on an individual, who is then placed at risk of losing their private permit.

Recommendations to assist other communities considering introduction of an alcohol management system:

(Recommendations 16-23)

- 16. The commitment of the community and of key stakeholders was perceived to be a key element in the success of the Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island Alcohol Management System. Accordingly, new alcohol

management systems should similarly be developed in close partnership between community and key agencies.

17. The Department of Justice should consider funding an expert support person or support group to help from the early stages with the community's efforts to develop a local alcohol management plan. In this way the community can be informed early of what resources are available; and about legal and practical options for limiting the supply of alcohol; as well as the advantages and disadvantages of each.
18. The same advisory person or group could support the consultation process and provide advice on Permit Committee formation and function in communities which have adopted restrictions.
19. Financial support is required to implement an alcohol management system, including the required signage, community education and permit processing. Given that the NT Government will be likely to save significantly on the costs of policing and correctional services, and in the longer-term, hopefully on health care, this investment is likely to be a sound one.
20. Licensing Commission hearings should include the opportunity for women to speak in privacy with a female commissioner, to protect their confidentiality and ensure them unfettered voicing of their opinions in a safe and anonymous environment.
21. In areas where there is daily heavy drinking, necessary planning needs to be instituted for management of increased cases of alcohol withdrawal when access to alcohol may be ceased. This could range from continuing professional education for existing health staff, to provision of new facilities.
22. That outreach services and state of the art treatment be made available to those individuals with alcohol dependence who leave communities with alcohol restrictions to live in or around towns or cities where alcohol is readily available.
23. Further evaluation needs to be conducted into the role of treatment, including modern pharmacotherapies for relapse prevention, among Aboriginal Australians.

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation

(Recommendations 24-25)

24. That there be ongoing monitoring of the effectiveness of the Alcohol Management System, with periodic detailed evaluation (e.g. every five years) including interviews of community members, to allow for early detection of any incipient problems.
25. Formal study of the cost effectiveness and cost savings of the Alcohol Management System be conducted to document the likely net financial gain of such a system, and hence the value of government investment in supporting the development and administration of such systems.

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**Appendix 1: Application form for a liquor permit for the Groote Eylandt
Restricted Area**

NORTHERN TERRITORY LICENSING COMMISSION

APPLICATION FOR LIQUOR PERMIT FOR THE GROOTE EYLANDT
RESTRICTED AREA
For the period of July 2007 to 30th June 2008

Full Name:..... Date of Birth:
Driver's Licence No:
Other Proof of Identity and age:

Residential address in restricted area
Community: No:..... Street:.....
Applicants contact telephone number:..... Employer:.....

As the holder of the permits being applied for, you may obtain liquor into the restricted area or obtain it from premises in the restricted area that are licensed to sell liquor for removal and consumption away from the premises but not in quantities greater than, and not of types different from, those that are specified in the permit.

You may possess and consume liquor in the Groote Eylandt restricted area but only within those areas of land approved by the Licensing Commission, being generally exempt areas within the Alyangula township and exempt areas within the Umbakumba area.

Your personal reason for applying for a liquor permit:
.....
.....

Declaration by applicant:

I (name)agree that I have read and understood the attached conditions, or have had the conditions explained to me and understand them, and agree to abide by them. I understand that if I do not abide by the attached conditions, then the Commission may revoke or amend the permit. I also understand that I may appeal a decision about the refusal, revocation or amendment of the permit by making a request in writing to the NT Licensing Commission seeking a review.

I acknowledge that information in this permit application and any information regarding liquor purchases made in accordance with the permit may be provided to the NT Police and Licensing Inspectors of Licensing and Regulation for the purpose of enforcement and compliance with the Liquor Act. I understand that I have the right to inspect any and all information so compiled.

Signature of applicant:..... Date:.....

GROOTE EYLANDT LIQUOR PERMIT COMMITTEE COMMENTS & REQUIREMENTS

(Indicate whether supported or not supported and any special requirements):

SUPPORTED:

NOT SUPPORTED: (specify reasons)

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS: (also specify reason)

Signed by the following designated office holders:

Note: The permit being applied for may not be approved unless supported by the Groote Eylandt Permit Committee, as evidenced by both of the following designated office holders approved by the NT Licensing Commission.

NT POLICE (required)

(Name) Signature: Date..../..../....

Groote Eylandt Liquor Permit committee (required)

(Name) Signature: Date..../..../....

Conditions of permit and responsibilities of permit holders

1. Applicants must have attained the age of 18 years and be a resident of the Groote Eylandt restricted areas.
2. A permit may be revoked by the Licensing Commission at its discretion.
 - a. Causes substantial annoyance or disrupts community order and peace, or
 - b. Assaults any person or is involved in alcohol –related domestic or family violence or traffic or vehicular incidents, or
 - c. Illegally brings liquor into, or possess or consumes liquor in, a restricted area, or
 - d. Brings a dangerous drug (defined in the Misuse of Drugs Act) into, or possesses a dangerous drug in, a restricted area, or
 - e. Supplies liquor to another person who is not a permit holder or who is not an invited guest of the permit holder, or
 - f. Supplies of dangerous drug to another person, or
 - g. Litters the restricted area with refuse from the liquor obtained in accordance with a permit, or
 - h. Breaches any of the conditions on the permit
3. Persons whose permits are cancelled may apply for a new liquor permit.
4. The permit expires on the 30th of June next year.

Appendix 2: Example of a Letter of Revocation for the community of Alyangula (source: Racing, Gaming and Licensing)



Postal Address:
Director of Licensing
GPO Box 1154
DARWIN NT 0801

RACING, GAMING AND LICENSING

Office Address:
Level 1, Enterprise House
Cnr Woods and Knuckey Streets
Darwin NT 0800

Facsimile: (08) 89997498
Telephone: (08) 89991310

Our Ref: RGL2006/87

Mr/Mrs etc etc
GROOTE EYLANDT NT 0885

Dear Mr/Mrs

RE: LIQUOR PERMIT NO #

Alyangula Police have advised the Licensing Commission that you have breached conditions of your permit and as a result of these actions your permit has been revoked forthwith. Your permit should be surrendered to the Alyangula Police as soon as possible. Please note Section 93 of the *Liquor Act*.

Section 93 of the *Liquor Act* states:

“Where the holder of a permit contravenes or fails to comply with a condition of his permit, in addition to any penalties to which he may be subject for an offence against section 75(1) as a consequence of that contravention or failure –

- (a) that permit shall be revoked forthwith; and*
- (b) the holder of that permit shall surrender it to an inspector or a member of the Police Force upon demand made by that inspector or a member of the Police Force.”*

Should you have any queries concerning this matter please contact Licensing Inspector Doug Bell on 8999 1310.

Yours sincerely

Deputy Director of Licensing

26 June 2007

cc: [Alyangula Police / Groote Eylandt Liquor Permit Committee](#)