

**Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee**  
**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**  
**Additional Estimates 23-27 February 2015**

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

**Department/Agency:** Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet  
**Outcome/Program:** Outcome 2: Indigenous  
**Topic:** Alcohol Licences

**Senator:** Senator Nova Peris

**Question reference number:** 79

**Type of question:** FPA Friday 27 February 2015, page 58

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer:** 10 April 2015

**Number of pages:** 2

**Question:**

Senator PERIS: Minister, as you would probably very well know, the police crime statistics have confirmed that 2013 and 2014 were the most violent years in the history of the Northern Territory, with 65 per cent of assaults being alcohol-related domestic violence. Earlier this week Rosie Batty talked about the link between alcohol and family violence, and all the research shows that the amount of alcohol violence is linked to the number of alcohol outlets—and the Northern Territory has both the highest rate of alcohol outlets and the highest rates of violence. The previous Labor government in Canberra had bought back several alcohol licences in the Northern Territory; however, the current Northern Territory government has said that they are looking at increasing the number of licences and increasing the hours that they operate. Are you concerned by this and would your government consider a buyback scheme to reduce alcohol violence?

Senator Scullion: First of all I agree with the sentiment that there is a very close connection between alcohol and violence particularly in environments like the Northern Territory. As you would be aware, there are some significant changes in the environment in places like Alice Springs since those statistics came around. We have had significant reductions—and I have had quoted to me in the last few days a reduction of 70 per cent in reportable incidences of alcohol-related violence in places like Alice Springs, and this is down to the process of having a police officer outside all of the takeaways. That has had a significant impact. I am not sure of the buybacks you are speaking of but if they were the buybacks that I think you are talking about—you can perhaps provide further information—we actually purchased I think through the ILC two liquor outlets and by my best recollection they were purchased on behalf of Lhere Artepe through the ILC.

Ms Edwards: I have not brought the material in relation to that buyback scheme with me this time as it was some time ago but there was a program several years ago—either in the initial days of the emergency response or shortly thereafter—where we bought back a couple of licences under an amount set aside. There were negotiations for a third which did not proceed. That program happened then in relation to particularly targeted licences and the money was expended and those licences as I recall were purchased and surrendered but we have not been doing business like that now for several years.

Senator Scullion: I think one of them was Piggly Wiggly's—anyway it does not matter where they were but there were others bought subsequently where we made an assumption that the liquor licence would disappear because the ILC had purchased it. That was an understanding I think of the board at the time. That did not happen for different reasons but I think we should be continuing to look at any options to reduce supply. I am not sure how acute the connectivity is between the number of outlets and violence—certainly you could not fall over without hitting your head on an outlet in Alice Springs years ago. Certainly we are more than happy to take perhaps part of that advice on notice because I am not sure which particular element you are referring to unless you have some more information around the question.

Ms Edwards: Just to clarify, the minister is talking about a particular liquor licence but I think he was meaning to refer to the ABA funding rather than the ILC.

Senator Scullion: Yes, sorry, it was the ABA funding and the board had made some assumptions that on purchase the licences would go. I cannot really recall the details but they did not end up going because of some technical transactional thing—they remained with the store.

**Answer:**

The Government does not have any current programme to buy back liquor licences in the Northern Territory. Liquor licensing is a matter for the Northern Territory Government.

The Government has committed funding through the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory National Partnership Agreement to address alcohol misuse and alcohol related harm.