



MEDIA RELEASE

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For immediate release

Liquor inspectors out in full force during 'Black Friday' period

The Western Cape Liquor Authority (WCLA) plays a crucial role in ensuring that liquor is sold and consumed responsibly in the Western Cape, in attempts to reduce alcohol-related harms and help create safer, more cohesive communities. These harms include, amongst others, high rates of interpersonal violence, homicide, foetal alcohol spectrum disorder, burden of disease and fatal road traffic accidents. This year's 'Black Friday' sales bring with them the additional risk of an increase in the spread of COVID-19 and potential 'super spreader' events.

The WCLA's Compliance and Enforcement unit will be conducting various liquor inspections during the 'Black Friday' period to ensure adherence to all COVID-19 safety protocols and liquor licence conditions.

Whilst there is a need for increased economic activity and supporting of local businesses, licence holders must keep in mind the safety of both their staff and customers. According to licence conditions and the National Disaster Management Regulations, it is the responsibility of the licence holder to ensure the safety of customers in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The WCLA encourages licence holders to take the following measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19:

- Enforce the 'golden rules' (1.5m social distancing, hand washing/sanitizing, mask-wearing, coughing and sneezing into a tissue or elbow).
- Maintain control over the behaviour of customers and avoid any crowding. If necessary, hire a security guard.
- Put up clearly visible and adequate signage with details of health and safety protocols.
- Train staff in how to enforce these protocols.
- Report any incidents of disorderly persons contravening these measures to SAPS.

These COVID-19 protocols have been incorporated into the training that the WCLA offers to all new liquor licence holders to assist them in complying with their licence conditions. Licence holders need to be cognisant of the harms associated with alcohol and show commitment as good corporate citizens to improving the wellbeing of the communities in which they operate.

Since the creation of safe communities is one of the top strategic priorities of the Western Cape Government's Safety and Recovery plans, the WCLA has aligned its strategic focus specifically towards the reduction of alcohol-related harms. Research by the Department of Community

Safety on violent crime in 11 priority areas of the Western Cape during the COVID-19 lockdown suggests that a lack of access to alcohol contributed to a reduction in violent crime.¹

The WCLA Acting CEO, Advocate Leatitia Petersen said: "The national lockdown and liquor ban have clearly demonstrated the role that liquor plays in the high rates of violence in this Province. It is crucial that license holders comply with their liquor licence conditions and the National Disaster Management Regulations to ensure responsible liquor trading and consumption, and avoid any potential fines or licence sanctions."

Since the 27 March 2020, the WCLA's Compliance and Enforcement unit has executed 242 investigations to date.

Of these 242 matters, 83 section 71 matters were placed on the LLT case roll of which:

- 49 licences were suspended
- 23 applications were dismissed
- 11 applications were referred back to the Prosecutor

Of the 49 licences that were suspended, 49 section 71 (4) return hearings took place in which:

- 1 licence was revoked after finalisation of a section 20 consideration, while 46 suspensions were lifted by the Liquor Licensing Tribunal;
- 2 suspensions were lifted, one in the High Court and one as part of internal Appeal Tribunal proceedings; and
- No return hearings are pending.

Seventy-two COVID19 related section 20 matters were forwarded to the Liquor Licensing Tribunal of which one licence was revoked, five applications dismissed while in three matters the licensee was issued with stricter conditions. Three licences were suspended while one licence was cancelled. One application was referred back to the Prosecutor. In twenty two matters fines to the amount of R2 236 220 were issued, of which an amount of R1 241 220 was suspended for a period of 24 months on condition that the licence holder does not contravene the Act and licence conditions again during this period. 36 matters are pending.

The WCLA takes cognisance of the fact that COVID19 has had a severe economic impact on many businesses and as such, all license holders in financial distress are encouraged to approach the Western Cape Government COVID-19 Content Centre for Business on supportbusiness@wesgro.co.za or www.supportbusiness.co.za for business support or disaster relief funding.

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¹ Western Cape Department of Community Safety (2020). Violent crime in 11 priority areas of the Western Cape during the COVID-19 lockdown. Available at: https://www.westerncape.gov.za/files/20200629_violent_crime_during_lockdown_-_report_final_with_recommendations_1.pdf