

Media Release

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Dry polls stop for Boroondara restaurant and cafe licences

In a move to reduce financial and administrative burden on residents, small businesses and government, the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation (VCGLR) will no longer order voting polls for restaurant and cafe licences within the City of Boroondara.

Under liquor licensing laws, the VCGLR is required to order a poll of residents in a dry area prior to granting an application for a general, on-premises or club licence.

The VCGLR has conducted dry polls in the City of Boroondara for restaurant and cafe licences on a discretionary basis since the licence category was introduced in 2010. Stopping these dry polls for Boroondara brings it in line with the City of Whitehorse, where polls are not conducted for this type of liquor licence.

Director of Licensing for the VCGLR Alex Fitzpatrick said during the last five years Boroondara residents have consistently approved each application for a restaurant and cafe licence.

“The consistent poll voting patterns displayed by residents since 2010 show there is a community acceptance for restaurants and cafes in the area,” she said.

“So there is no need to add this additional financial and administrative burden to residents, small businesses, and government.”

Effective from Wednesday 6 May 2015, restaurant and cafe liquor licence applications made in the dry area boundary of Balwyn North, Balwyn, Canterbury, Camberwell, Glen Iris and Ashburton will now only need to submit an application to the VCGLR. Any polls scheduled with the Victorian Electoral Commission prior to 6 May will still go ahead and residents must comply with their requirement to vote.

Ms Fitzpatrick said while dry polls will no longer be conducted in the future for restaurant and cafe licence applications, this does not change the VCGLR’s regulatory approach to applications and the ability for the community to object to a liquor licence.

“We have a risk-based approach to assessing licence applications that are more likely to cause harm to the community; this does not change with the end of a dry poll for restaurant and cafes,” she said.

“While it is recognised that a venue like a late trading nightclub has a higher risk of community harm than a cafe, that serves a glass of wine with lunch, we still assess the merits of each application carefully.”

“In addition to our risk assessments, councils and the community still have the opportunity to object to the grant of a restaurant and cafe licence.”

The VCGLR and Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) will continue to poll affected dry areas for general (hotel and bar), on-premises and club liquor licence applications.

For further information about dry areas please visit vcglr.vic.gov.au.

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