



28 July 2010

**Liquor Stax Australia – application for authorisation A91237
– request for interim authorisation**

REASONS

DECISION

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (the ACCC) has decided to grant interim authorisation in respect of the application for authorisation lodged by Liquor Stax Australia on 30 June 2010.

Interim authorisation commences immediately, and will remain in place until the date the ACCC's final determination comes into effect or unless revoked.

THE APPLICATION

Liquor Stax is seeking authorisation, on behalf of around 200 small businesses comprising liquor merchants and hotels, to collectively bargain with around 60 suppliers of inputs such as alcohol, cigarettes, poker machines and confectionery as well as services such as advertising, insurance and communications.

Liquor Stax proposes to collectively negotiate the following terms with suppliers:

- price
- terms of supply
- settlement discounts
- product development
- joint advertising and marketing
- distribution.

The applicants are seeking authorisation for a period of five years. Member participation in any given transaction is voluntary and imposes no restrictions on a member's choice of suppliers.

THE AUTHORISATION PROCESS

The ACCC can grant immunity from the application of the competition provisions of the *Trade Practices Act 1974* (the Act) if it is satisfied that the benefit to the public

from the conduct outweighs any public detriment. The ACCC conducts a public consultation process to assist it to determine whether a proposed arrangement results in a net public benefit.

INTERIM AUTHORISATION

Section 91 of the Act allows the ACCC to grant interim authorisation without making a decision on the merits of the application.

The ACCC will only grant interim authorisation in appropriate circumstances. In many circumstances it is not appropriate to do so because interim authorisation allows an applicant, for a limited period, to engage in conduct before the ACCC has been able to fully assess whether the conduct satisfies the authorisation test.

CONSULTATION

Upon receipt of the application for authorisation, the ACCC invited submissions from interested parties in order to consider the request for interim authorisation. No submissions in relation to the request for interim authorisation were received by the ACCC.

REASONS FOR DECISION

In granting interim authorisation the ACCC has taken into account that granting interim authorisation will avoid disruption to the business of Liquor Stax and its members while the substantive application for authorisation is assessed.

RECONSIDERATION OF DECISION

The ACCC may review its decision on interim authorisation at any time. The ACCC's decision in relation to interim authorisation should not be taken to be indicative of whether or not final authorisation will be granted.