

National Liquor Traders Council (NLTC)**Direct email:** Lucky@nationalliquortraders.org

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HE President Cyril Matamela Ramaphosa

Republic of South Africa

Email: PresidentRSA@presidency.gov.za**23 May 2021****Dear President Ramaphosa****RE: REQUEST FOR A MEETING TO EXPLORE SOLUTIONS TO TACKLE INCREASE
IN COVID-19 INFECTIONS RE THIRD WAVE****Introduction**

1. We write this letter as a coalition of liquor traders in South Africa comprising the National Liquor Traders Council (NLTC) and Liquor Traders Association of South Africa (LTASA).
2. We are an organization of liquor traders representing many **township-based taverns** and **bottle stores** throughout South Africa. We operate a combined **39,900** liquor outlets: taverns (34,500) and bottle stores (4,000) employing well over **282,000** workers
3. Our businesses are in the main black owned and key local employers and economic contributors to the township economy and the country at large. The tavern sector is worth over R60 billion annually accounting for 80 – 90% of liquor sales in townships, and approximately 43% of total alcohol sales.
4. We are law-abiding liquor traders, licensed to sell liquor products that are regulated, and which do not contain illicit substances or ingredients that may be unfit for human consumption, such as those sold by the illicit trade.
5. Our purpose is to canvass and consolidate the views and proposals of our members and to make submissions to our government that address the unique challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.
6. The purpose of this letter is to seek a meeting with your office to achieve the following:
 - 6.1. Find sustainable solutions and support government efforts to combat the pandemic in every way possible.
 - 6.2. Call upon the President and his team to engage liquor traders, especially, where any decisions taken have a potential impact on our businesses.
 - 6.3. Ensure that any decisions taken are guided by scientific evidence.

7. We have noted with concern the increase in COVID-19 related hospitalisations and positive tests across South Africa, which suggest that the country faces a third wave of the pandemic and that urgent action is necessary.
8. In our view, and as we have always maintained, the rise in COVID-19 infections is a much bigger societal challenge that requires all of us – business, civic society and government – to work together to find lasting solutions.
9. There is no doubt that as a country, one of the most important lessons that we have learnt from our past experiences of dealing with the pandemic is that we can still fight COVID-19 with a less negative impact on our economy. In our case, liquor traders, can continue to operate, subject to fully complying with safe operating standards, in a way that was not always possible previously.
10. Where restrictions in economic activity are required, these should be clearly explained with clear end dates. This allows businesses to plan, rather than facing an open-ended disruption which is significantly more difficult to manage and leads to far greater business distress and job losses. Setting clear end dates, or at least clear criteria upon which restrictions would be lifted (such as infection rates) is vital.
11. We wish to assure you that as liquor traders, we will continue to play our part in the fight against the spread of COVID-19 in the liquor trade and in the communities in which we operate.
12. Thus far, we have been working closely with the liquor industry to drive maximum compliance with COVID-19 safety protocols among taverners and their patrons. This includes hiring Community Policing Forum members to enhance safety in and around taverns and conduct inspections to check on compliance to COVID-19 protocols and liquor licence conditions.
13. Tavern owners have also been educated on the importance of adhering to COVID-19 safety protocols and outlets that fail to remedy non-compliance are reported to the liquor authorities for further action to be taken.
14. As we remember all those that have succumbed to COVID-19, we applaud government's efforts to save as many lives as possible.
15. We have no doubt that notwithstanding the challenges we currently face, South Africa will, once again, be a global beacon of hope and resilience - a nation that has and will once again rise up and overcome in spite of the odds.

Thank you in anticipation of a positive consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Lucky Ntimane

Convener: National Liquor Traders Council