

MEDIA STATEMENT

Wednesday, 19 August 2026

Editors / News Journalists

Embargo: Immediate Release

FSGLTA TAKES FIRM ACTION AGAINST NON-COMPLIANT LIQUOR OUTLETS TO PROTECT COMMUNITIES AND UPHOLD THE RULE OF LAW

The Free State Gambling and Liquor Authority (FSGLTA) has reiterated its firm commitment to upholding the rule of law, enforcing the provisions of the Free State Gambling and Liquor Act, as amended, and ensuring that liquor is sold and consumed in environments that are safe, lawful and conducive to the wellbeing of communities.

As part of its ongoing regulatory and enforcement responsibilities, the FSGLTA has acted against several liquor outlets across the Free State following investigations and reports of serious contraventions. These interventions demonstrate that the Authority will not hesitate to exercise its statutory powers where licensees, operators or other persons associated with liquor outlets fail to comply with the conditions of their licences and the applicable legislation.

In the **Lejweleputswa District**, two liquor licences belonging to Mzi Hao Bottle Store CC, trading as **Lucy's Restaurant and Lucy's Lounge in Odendaalsrus**, were cancelled following several contraventions reported by the South African Police Service (SAPS). The director of the company was afforded opportunities to respond to the allegations and appear before the Board. Despite being invited through his legal representative to make oral representations, the director failed to make the required representations. The Board consequently applied the relevant provisions of the Act and cancelled the two licences.

The FSGLTA has also instructed **Motsumi's Tavern in Meloding, Virginia**, to cease operations after an investigation found that the liquor licence had been obtained using a fraudulent identity document. Verification with the Department of Home Affairs established that the identity document had been fraudulently used by a foreign national. Following the deportation of the individual concerned, the person continuing to operate the outlet was instructed to cease operations, as the licence was found to be null and void from inception.

In **Welkom**, the FSGLTA was alerted by SAPS to concerns relating to **Eddi's Tavern**. An investigation established that the outlet was being operated by a foreign national who had not been appointed in accordance with Regulation 61 of the Free State Gambling and Liquor Act, as amended. The registered owner of the licence was also deceased, while the person leasing the licence to the operator could not provide the required documentary proof of a

lawful right to operate the business. The outlet was therefore instructed to cease operations pending the production of satisfactory documentation confirming the right to operate the premises.

The Authority has further taken decisive action against **Paulo's Tavern in Botshabelo**, following a shooting incident in May 2026 in which one person lost their life and two others were seriously injured. Although investigations established that the shooting did not take place inside the tavern, evidence presented during the subsequent hearing established that the outlet was operating outside its authorised trading hours. The tavern was found to have remained open and operational between approximately 03h30 and 04h00, despite its authorised trading hours ending at 02h00.

This constituted a serious contravention of the applicable legislation and contributed to an environment in which the victims were shot outside the tavern. Following due process, the licence was cancelled in terms of the applicable provisions of the Act.

In **Hennenman**, the Authority has also acted against **Fada's Restaurant** following concerns raised by SAPS regarding the identity document allegedly used by the licence holder, Mr Teboho Godfrey Sithole. An investigation involving the Department of Home Affairs indicated that the identity document was a duplicate and required further verification through fingerprints. Mr Sithole was instructed to present himself to Home Affairs for verification but failed to do so. The Authority subsequently discovered that a new licence application had been submitted for the same premises by a different applicant. The matter has been referred to the Board for consideration of the cancellation of the existing licence.

The FSGLTA emphasises that liquor licences are not a licence to operate outside the law. A liquor licence carries responsibilities and obligations, and every licence holder is expected to comply fully with the conditions of the licence, prescribed trading hours, legislation and all applicable regulatory requirements.

The Authority is particularly concerned about the misuse and abuse of the liquor licensing regulatory framework by traders who deliberately circumvent prescribed requirements, use fraudulent documentation, allow unauthorised persons to operate licensed premises, or continue trading despite being instructed to cease operations. Such conduct undermines legitimate liquor traders who comply with the law and places communities, patrons and law-enforcement agencies at unnecessary risk.

The FSGLTA therefore issues a strong appeal to all liquor traders and licence holders in the Free State to always operate within the prescribed regulatory framework. Traders must ensure that their licences are valid, that the correct persons are authorised to operate their businesses, that trading takes place strictly within approved hours, and that all licence conditions and statutory requirements are observed.

The Authority further calls on communities across the Free State to become the eyes and ears of the regulator. Communities are encouraged to report suspected illegal liquor trading, operation outside prescribed hours, fraudulent licences or documentation, unauthorised operators, violent incidents associated with liquor outlets and any other conduct that may constitute a contravention of the law.

Given the size of the Free State and the limited resources available to the Authority, FSGLTA personnel cannot always be physically present at every liquor outlet in every community. Community participation is therefore critical to effective regulation and enforcement. Information received from communities, together with intelligence and reports from SAPS and other law-enforcement agencies, enables the Authority to identify problematic outlets and take appropriate regulatory action.

The FSGLTA assures the people of the Free State that allegations brought to its attention will be assessed and investigated in accordance with the law and that appropriate action will be taken where contraventions are established. The Authority will continue to work with SAPS, the Department of Home Affairs, municipalities and other stakeholders to strengthen compliance and enforcement across the province.

The Authority reiterates that its enforcement actions are not intended to undermine legitimate liquor businesses. Rather, they are aimed at protecting compliant traders, safeguarding patrons, reducing harm associated with irresponsible liquor trading and ensuring that liquor outlets operate in accordance with the law.

The FSGLTA calls on all liquor traders to take their regulatory responsibilities seriously. Compliance is not optional. The law applies equally to every licence holder, regardless of the size, location or popularity of the establishment.

The Authority will continue to use the powers vested in it by legislation to deal firmly with non-compliance and will not allow the abuse of liquor licences to compromise public safety, the integrity of the licensing system or the wellbeing of Free State communities.

ENDS

Issued by: Communications Unit on behalf of the Free State Gambling and Liquor Authority. For more information contact Tshediso Lerumo – 082 092 3896 / lerumot@fsglta.gov.za.

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Board Members: Mr J. Tladi (Chairperson); Ms T. Morule (Deputy Chairperson); Mr T. Mabilo; Rev. T.L. Mashiloane; Mr P. Matlanyane; Brig. K. Ntlati; Ms M. Sikisi; Adv T. Ramatlakane, Mr O. Seseane (Acting CEO); Adv M. Dhlamini (Company Secretary)