



MEDIA RELEASE

Monday, 27 August 2018

RESTAURANT OFFERING ONLY PRETZELS CONVICTED FOR OPERATING AS UNAUTHORISED BAR

A Newcastle restaurant that had only one item on its menu after 9pm – pretzels with cheese sauce – has been convicted for operating as an unauthorised bar.

In Newcastle Local Court on 20 August, Benjamin Dewson, licensee of the 5 Sawyers restaurant on Darby St, pleaded guilty to the offence that was detected as part of a Liquor & Gaming NSW compliance operation.

Inspectors visited the restaurant on 16 September 2017 between 9.35pm and 10.25pm and found no table service was being offered and patrons buying drinks from the bar.

The duty manager told the inspectors that only a “limited menu” was available after 9pm, with the sole item being a “German style pretzel with a cheese dipping sauce and cracked pepper”.

Magistrate David Price fined Mr Dawson \$1,200 and ordered him to pay legal costs of \$3,500.

Magistrate Price said: “This is not a matter to be trivialised. There needs to be a general deterrence in the hospitality industry. There should be a clear and consistent message that there must be full compliance with liquor licence requirements.”

This is the second prosecution of a Newcastle venue for this offence. In February, the former operators of Soho on Darby were convicted and fined for operating their restaurant like a nightclub.

Liquor & Gaming NSW’s Director of Compliance Operations, Sean Goodchild, said the regulator is monitoring higher risk venues and practices and will intervene where an operator misuses its licence or authority to disguise its activities.

“We have investigated a number of recent cases where a venue with a restaurant licence operates as a nightclub or bar,” he said.

“These business models misrepresent their activities and disregard strict obligations under NSW liquor laws, increasing risks of alcohol-related harm.”

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