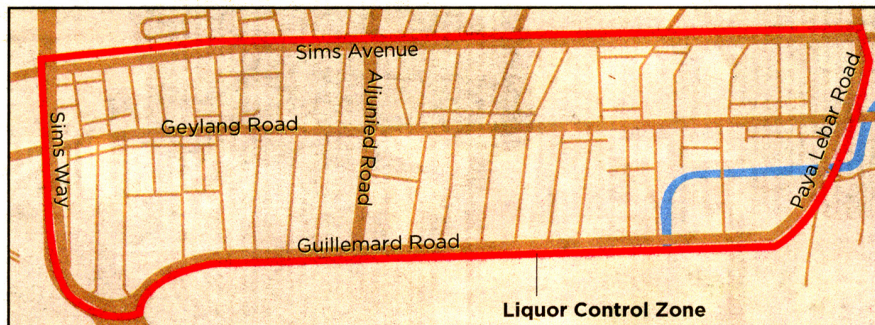


## GEYLANG



Law professor says proposed Bill recognises problems that irresponsible drinking can cause

# Bringing 'normalcy' to alcohol control

## Liquor Control (Supply and Consumption) Bill

### Restrictions on alcohol consumption in public

Consumption of liquor in all public places will not be allowed from 10.30pm to 7am daily.

Public places, whether open-air or enclosed, are those accessible to the public, like parks and void decks. Residences are excluded.

Event organisers may apply for a permit for exceptions to this restriction for a specific place and time.

Liquor consumption is allowed at licensed premises, like restaurants, coffee shops or bars, during the hours stipulated in their permits.

### Restrictions on sale hours for take-away liquor

Take-away liquor sales will not be allowed after 10.30pm. Extension of sale hours may be granted on case-by-case basis.

### Liquor control zones

Specific areas in Little India and Geylang will be designated as Liquor Control Zones.

Other areas with significant risk of public disorder linked to excessive drinking can also be designated.

These zones will have stricter restrictions on sale hours and consumption of take-away liquor as well as enhanced penalties for liquor-related offences.

### Transfer of existing provisions

Existing offences related to public drunkenness and liquor licensing provisions will be moved to the new legislation.

A Licensing Officer will be appointed to make regulatory decisions while a Liquor Appeal Board will hear appeals against these decisions.

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### While it's like the pendulum swinging from one end to the other, it's a big step towards normalcy.

This was Singapore Management University law professor Eugene Tan's view of the Liquor Control (Supply and Consumption) Bill, which was tabled in Parliament yesterday.

Said Associate Professor Tan, who has, as a Nominated Member of Parliament, spoken extensively on liquor restrictions: "I look at the existing regime as an abnormal situation where people can walk around and consume alcohol relatively freely any time of the day."

"We are bringing some normalcy to the alcohol control regime and duly recognising the disamenities that irresponsible drinking could cause. I believe the new regime will be appreciated for that."

The restrictions include a ban on alcohol consumption in public places between 10.30pm and 7am.

If the Bill is passed, the measures will be imposed island-wide. It follows the Ministry of Home Affairs' (MHA) review

of liquor control measures since September 2012.

Said Prof Tan: "This signals our moving from a country with one of the most lax restrictions on alcohol sale and consumption to one which has fairly significant restrictions."

In countries like Australia and many states in the US, for instance, there are laws that prohibit drinking in public in varying degrees.

Although MHA started its review a few years ago, the Little India riot in 2013 was probably the tipping point, said Prof Tan.

### ZONES

Part of Little India, along with an area in Geylang, will be designated as Liquor Control Zones. (See maps above.)

Moulmein-Kallang GRC MP Denise Phua said she is satisfied that MHA took a "calibrated and tiered approach" — stricter measures for higher-risk areas like Little India, and ring-fencing residential common areas like void decks and corridors.

She said: "The majority of my residents in Little India will be pleased as they had given feedback on their satisfaction with the existing temporary pro-

vision liquor restriction measures implemented over the last year in Little India.

"The provisions had substantially improved their living environment and sense of security."

For coffee shop and bar owners, however, there is an air of uncertainty about the Bill, details of which have not been released.

As of now, coffee shops will not be affected as they have their own liquor permits allowing the sale and consumption of alcohol within the hours stipulated on their permits.

But Mr Hong Poh Hin, the chairman of the Fochow Coffee Restaurant and Bar Merchants Association, is worried that things may change following the Bill. "On the face of it, we still don't know whether (the Government) will shorten the hours stated on the liquor permit," he said.

Mr Hong added that the Bill could be a tad too harsh, given that the identified "problem areas" seem to be in Geylang and Little India.

"Perhaps for certain areas like residential estates, they can increase patrols instead so the people will not create a nuisance," he suggested.