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Small-bar industry gets a new voice to help cut government red tape



Reform: Etro Bar's Emma Panier with Small Bar Association of WA founder Dan Mossenson. Picture: Astrid Volzke

BEATRICE THOMAS

When small-bar owner Emma Panier opened King Street venue Etro Bar last November it came after a long, expensive and arduous application process.

Among the first small bars to open in Perth after the former Labor government's "change of scene" liquor reforms in 2007, she said an onerous public interest assessment was among criteria she had to satisfy under State and local government rules. "It did take a long time to get and it was an expensive process," Ms Panier said.

But WA's burgeoning small bar scene is about to get a welcome boost with the formation of an association to lobby government and raise the niche industry's profile.

Dan Mossenson, a liquor industry lawyer of 40 years, is behind the Small Bar Association of WA that includes "licensee, professional, industry and sponsor" members.

He said yesterday that streamlining the

processes now in place for prospective small-bar owners was among issues the association would be addressing.

Councils have been a stumbling block for many applicants, with many assessing applications under categories such as taverns, which required more stringent and often unachievable parking provisions, as well as reacting to residents' concerns.

"Some councils are receptive to the introduction of new licences and others are rather obstructive and unhelpful," Mr Mossenson said. "The association is designed to help facilitate the process of more of these diverse licences being available to the general public."

Mr Mossenson said the association, which will be launched officially on Monday, had already had a win, with the director of Liquor Licensing agreeing to process small-bar applications without the sign-off first from local authorities.

So far, 18 small bars have opened in WA, with six to open soon and seven applications before the director of Liquor Licensing.

Alcohol limits loom for Mid-West

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