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P.O. Box 757, Buderim, Q. 4556
CEO Mobile Contact: [REDACTED]

ABN: 71 283 287 800

Tackling Alcohol-fuelled Violence Amendment Bill 2015

RSL & Services Clubs Association Qld – Submission

This Association appreciates the opportunity the Committee has afforded organisations and individuals to make submissions on the above Bill.

We represent licensed RSL & Services Clubs operating in Queensland. Some of these clubs are amongst the largest clubs in the State, providing enormous financial and in kind support to returned service men & women both directly and through their support of their local RSL sub branches. As community based clubs with a broad range of members, they also support other community groups including schools, hospitals, boy scouts and girl guides and innumerable charities and other not for profit groups.

Our member clubs are very cognisant of their role in the community and are also aware of their responsibilities in regard to the responsible service of alcohol and gaming products.

RSL & Services Clubs and licensed clubs generally are membership based and have very strict rules in regard to appropriate behaviour by members, guests and visitors whilst on the premises of their club. Transgressors usually end up with either permanent exclusions, or exclusions that typically last for one to ten years, depending on the circumstances and severity of the offence. Consequently, incidents of drunkenness and unruly behaviour are few and far between.

We commend the Government for recognising that in addressing the very real problem that excessive consumption of alcohol causes to the community, they have moved away from a “one size fits all” approach. That is, they are not now introducing a 1 a.m. lock out for all venues, but limiting the application to those venues in Safe Night Out precincts. The Association is not convinced that lockouts are the answer to this particular problem, but are pleased that the Government has listened to reason and not extended the lockouts to all venues.

There are many aspects to violent behaviour and whilst it cannot be denied that excessive consumption of alcohol is a major trigger for some people, we cannot ignore the propensity of younger people, in particular, to also indulge in illicit drug taking.

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As far as alcohol sales are concerned, we understand that most alcohol (by far) is sold for off premise consumption. There has been a trend for many years for young people, especially, to preload before they even set foot on licensed premises and whilst responsible venues will ensure that people who are showing signs of intoxication are not allowed to enter the premises, it is inevitable that some will slip through the net. Often problems arise when these people are either refused entry or asked to leave the premises. Lack of public transport also contributes to aggressive behaviour and violent incidents do occur.

This Association strongly supports any measures that the Government and Community as a whole can invoke to change the culture within Queensland and Australia more broadly, to one that encourages the responsible consumption of alcohol and discourages over consumption of alcohol and the consumption of illicit drugs leading to aggressive and violent behaviour, particularly amongst the young.

The RSL & Services Clubs Association supports removing the nexus between liquor trading hours and gaming trading hours. Whilst there may have been good and cogent reasons for the connection originally, we submit with the passage of 23 years since the introduction of gaming machines in 1992, the industry has matured sufficiently that this measure is no longer required.

This leads to another consideration for the committee - There are a number of RSL & Services Clubs that currently trade to 3 a.m. These clubs will be adversely affected by the proposed cut back in hours to 2 a.m. This could be ameliorated to some extent if the Government would consider allowing clubs to open their doors earlier to accommodate the needs of shift workers, the elderly and early risers. We do not recommend that any early trading should include the sale and consumption of alcohol, but other products and services should be available, including an earlier start for gaming operations.

It may well be that some RSL & Services Clubs would be prepared to further trade off an hour of liquor trading hours at the end of the day for an hour earlier trading in the morning, albeit minus liquor trading. This would need to be at the individual club's choice.

Other considerations

We have been concerned to learn, albeit through the rumour mill, of allegations that some outlaw motorbike gangs are re-emerging on the Gold Coast proposing to create "party houses" with a proposal to run buses to these unlicensed venues to avoid lock outs and earlier closing hours. We cannot vouch for the veracity of these rumours, but we wanted to bring this possibility to the Committee's & Regulator's attention, that this could eventuate.

If this were to occur, it would certainly create a very dangerous environment, particularly for young people and for others in the community.

The Bill contains a number of other amendments. The one of most concern is in regard to prohibition on sale of "high alcohol content" drinks. This provision does have the potential to cause confusion to employees and confrontation by patrons and will need to be well managed. This Association welcomes the opportunity to participate in any industry discussions on how this measure will be implemented.

On behalf of this Association, I once again thank the Committee for giving us the opportunity of responding to the Bill.

Yours sincerely



PENNY WILSON
CEO