



**OH HELLO!**  
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To:

**The Research Director  
Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee  
Parliament House  
George Street  
BRISBANE QLD 4000**

Tackling Alcohol-fuelled Violence Legislation Amendment Bill 2015

Submission of Steven Papas, Oh Hello and OCD

### Introduction

The Tackling Alcohol-fuelled Violence Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 ("the bill") was introduced into the Queensland Parliament on 12 November 2015. It was thereafter referred to the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee for investigation and consideration, with the Committee's report due to Parliament on 8 February 2016.

The Committee has invited public submissions on the bill for its consideration, and this submission is being made in response to that invitation.

### Précis

The bill represents a further and unnecessary intervention by Government into the trading parameters for liquor licensed businesses. It is predicated on a series of false propositions, vis, that:

Queensland has a special problem with liquor-related violence

Current regulatory and policy settings are not adequate; and

Harsh interventions are required, despite the likely social and economic costs

Both official data from Queensland and other jurisdictions, as well as anecdotal evidence from numerous sources shows that Queensland's entertainment precincts have far lower rates of relevant crime than recognised trouble spots in places like Sydney, that Queensland is well-advanced in its co-operative approach to the management of entertainment precincts, and that the suite of measures which have been put in place are producing reductions in the already low rates of relevant crime within those precincts.

Accordingly, the Committee should recommend to Parliament that the reductions in trading hours and the interventions regarding the sale of certain types of drinks and liquor products not proceed in the form proposed, and that the range of measures already in place be continued.

As members of the Valley Liquor Accord, The Safe Night Fortitude Valley Precinct Association, and Our Nightlife Queensland, we would echo the recommendations and feedback made in their submissions to the parliamentary inquiry.

In summary, this is what is required:

- Local solutions for local areas
- Education and culture change via smart, modern and industry partnered campaigns
- Rest and recovery services
- Transport design and initiatives associated with this
- Local engagement groups to bring stakeholders together
- Drug and alcohol referral pathways
- Use of the current Liquor Act to manage trading hours and lockouts, and targeting of individual problem businesses (rather than all businesses) with harsher actions and penalties
- Implementation panel reporting to the Attorney-General and Premier

### Submission

Oh Hello was opened in 2011. I have been working in the Valley for over 10 years, managing venues, tours and musicians. I have also worked on Valley Fiesta, delivering the event in 2013 & 2014.

Our club provides a positive space for people to dance, socialize and enjoy cutting edge music, both electronic and live. Some examples of recent guests include:

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Aside from the nightclub I also have an events agency called OCD. We arrange and promote tours and events in places such as the Riverstage, RNA Showgrounds and the Brisbane Racing Club. We have never had any significant issues or prosecutions against us for liquor related issues, and never had a problem with violence at our venues and events.

The following are some basic statistics that will give the Committee a sense of our business:

- a) Average number of drinks purchased per person across our venues per week: 3-4 drinks, per head spend \$17-\$24. We have seen a decline in this since opening from approximately \$30-\$35 per head, indicating liquor is being served responsibly, and not in large amounts.
- b) Number of employees in our venue: We employ 17 people at the venue, across roles such as management, promotions, marketing, bar and floor.

We would expect a labour budget reduction somewhere in the region of 30% if the trading restrictions proposed were passed.

- c) GST paid per annum on average: Last year we turned over approximately \$3.3 million, GST payments were approximately \$300,000
- d) Total amount spent on entertainment: Approximately \$300,000 per annum, approximately 50% of which is on local entertainers.

We estimate this budget would be halved by approximately 50%. This would mean we would only book one international standard tour per month, rather than each week, sometimes twice a week. Essentially Brisbane would miss out on high quality electronic and live acts that we would otherwise host at our venue.

Furthermore, the cut to work for local performers would be significant, harming opportunities in the local music scene of which I am a major supporter through all of my businesses.

- e) Licensing Fees paid per annum across venues (as at 1 July 2015) = \$25,348

When these were introduced, we were under the impression the money would be flowing back into the community to pay for services such as OLGR compliance activity, police staffing, and other necessary services in the entertainment precinct. I note comment from the Police Union that they are in fact understaffed and under resourced, and this concerns me greatly. As a responsible operator in the Valley, I know that the best remedy to criminal activity is police presence. Business would be happy to pay for their important service, but we have experienced a period where the money has not gone to where it belongs. I could hire a police special to look after my venue at busy times with the amount of money we pay in fees, so this must be addressed, rather than reducing hours.

I am a member of the Valley Liquor Accord, the Fortitude Valley Safe Night Precinct Association, and other local community groups. I regularly attend these meetings with my General Manager, Mr Perry Scott, who is a well-known operator in Brisbane's hospitality industry. I work with QUT Creative Industries to provide internships and work experience for selected students, as I am committed to the entertainment industry and its future.

Some of my feedback on the proposals in the bill are below:

\* New last drinks time - 2am instead of 5am

- I understand the governments wish to address violence, but would argue that a simplistic response like reducing trading hours misses the mark. We operate in a highly regulated environment, and our staff and management hold up the ideals of RSA and RMLV at all times. Government should realize that we simply are not serving people large amounts of liquor, as evidenced by the purchasing figures noted above. The vast amount of liquor purchased and consumed in society is at bottle shops, and in the home, where these ideals around RSA do not exist. Why are we not targeting pre-loading and cheap alcohol at liquor barns? The vast amount of issues we experience in the Valley occur in the public space, perpetrated by criminals who have pre-loaded, and not been allowed into our venues. These types of plans don't address this at all.

\* In precincts, 1am Lockout & 3am Last Drinks (effectively closing time) instead of 3am Lockout & 5am Close

- As above, it simply doesn't address what's going on. We have been doing the right thing for so long, compared to those who came before us, when the industry was not highly regulated.

\* No shots or straight spirits after 12am midnight, potentially bans on cocktails and RTDs

- This goes a bit far, as I said before, our staff are well trained and serve responsibly. We have never been prosecuted for irresponsible service, so limiting what people can drink and serve at certain times doesn't quite make sense. If OLGR enforced current laws.

\* Pokies allowed to continue to operate after last drinks

- Our business is not predicated on gaming, it is predicated on entertainment. To say that having pokies is an incentive to stay open doesn't work for us. To cover our expenses of operating later at night, selling liquor responsibly is what we do. Cutting hours of one whilst effectively removing a lockout for another doesn't stack up. One part of the hospitality industry is being sacrificed so that Clubs and Pubs in the suburbs, predicated on gambling, can continue to do business. You don't have to be an academic to realize the harm from gambling in low socio-economic suburbs (where pokies are highly concentrated), is incredibly worse than what happens in the Valley.





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\* Exemptions for Casinos - 24 hour trading (and alcohol served)

- Casinos in Las Vegas, Sydney and Melbourne all operate large scale nightclubs in their complexes. It is not a hard assessment to make that Echo (who operate The Star in Sydney, home to Marquee Nightclub), will seek to include this style of venue in the overall plan. It is hard for small business people like myself to swallow, thinking that the scene we have developed and invested in will be shifted to a club owned by a multi national company with revenue in the billions of dollars. Furthermore, this type of venue will not support local artists and niche musical styles, it will stick to the mainstream. We operate our venues very responsibly, and there is no truth to the argument that Casinos are in some way "more responsible" than we are. I don't see the Casino involved in the community in any way, at lease not here in the Valley.

Our local area will be a sad place if these changes were passed. The local economy is only starting to pick up again after a tough few years, and this will slow things down once again. We have innovative industries moving into the area, development moving ahead, all based on the character of the Valley. That character will be wiped out.

I was planning to use the capital in my nightclub business to further finance the expansion of my events and festival business. This is now not a reality for me, as the value of Oh Hello has been slashed by banks and financiers based on their assessments of the damage trading hour and lockout changes will have to the viability of Oh Hello. I am one of the few people in Brisbane still trying to produce festival style events. In the face of the hardships seen in this space evidenced by festivals like Soundwave and Future Music being cancelled, I think it is a positive thing for entrepreneurs to be trying to create cultural and contemporary experiences for people at this juncture. Our upcoming festival, FOMO, being held on 9th of January at Riverstage, has recently been voted number one upcoming festival for summer on inthemix.com (owned by Junkee Media). This is great for Brisbane, and Queensland as a whole, for the city and its events to be featured on Australia's number one contemporary music website. I simply would not have been able to develop an event like this without the bedrock of my nightclub business.

I fully support the submissions made on our industries behalf by the Valley Liquor Accord, and Our Nightlife Queensland.