

KATARZYNA

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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 KATARZYNA GROUP

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

Our venues have been at the forefront of the hospitality industry in Queensland, bringing a unique and high standard offering to local, interstate and international guests. We have been operating in the Valley for over 17 years and have worked hard to see the Valley become an iconic entertainment area recognized not only throughout Queensland but also nationally as offering a vast selection of well operated venues such as restaurants, cocktail bars, event spaces and nightclubs. The venues situated in the Valley include:

- Cloudland
- The Empire Hotel
- The Press Club
- Family
- Bunk Backpackers
- Birdee's

The Bickle family are well known in Brisbane for their hospitality ventures, creating venues and businesses that have made this state a destination. Whilst late night trade is only a portion of the entire business interests of the family, it is an important one.

Katarzyna Group is also one of the largest supporters of the Valley Liquor Accord and the Safe Night Precinct Association. The accord was founded thanks to the foresight and community spirit of Louis Bickle, when he was president of the Valley Chamber of Commerce. The group continues to support a myriad of community organizations throughout the city and state to this day.

The investment in other venues operated by the family simply could not have been made without the bedrock of venues situated in Fortitude Valley. Some of these other ventures include:

- Victoria Park Golf Course Complex
- South Bank Surf Club
- Live Fire Steak Bar, South Bank
- Developments in Howard Smith Wharves
- Islander Resort, Gold Coast

These venues and future developments are key planks in Brisbane becoming a “New World City”, and assist the drive for tourism and events-related business in the state.

It is a simple fact that the entrepreneurial spirit that created these ventures, could not have existed had the current proposals been in effect all those years ago. Ventures like the Press Club, and the original Empire Hotel, were venues where the fledgling cocktail and electronic music scenes developed. Without the Press Club, cocktail culture in Brisbane would have been set back a decade.

The business model has evolved and unlocked significantly over the past decade, with Cloudland now being recognized as one of Brisbane’s premier function venues. The proposed changes to trading hours and lockouts does not just affect nightclubs, the functions business will hurt as well. Many clients choose Cloudland due to its location in the Valley precinct as opposed to CBD venues, as the area offers choice once a function winds up. We do not look forward to having to explain to clients that they may not re-enter the venue after 1am, having done the responsible thing and walked someone to a transport option after this time. It is patently unfair that responsible adults will be treated this way due to the behaviour of a very small amount of criminals.

Over 9,200 patrons on a weekly bases visit our venues both in Brisbane and the Gold Coast, with the average patron purchasing 4 drinks whilst visiting. Our venues currently employ 187 staff, with 162 casual employees.

A visit to our venues shows that they are at the cutting edge of design, product, and management processes. The associated businesses, artisans and tradespeople that we contract to work on our venues would number in the hundreds. These people will feel the effect of a rationalization of our business model, as we will simply no longer be able to invest in our spaces.

The effects of the proposed changes to the trading hours of venues will have a significant impact on our business model and therefore the number of staff that have regular casual work. There would be a 39% reduction in the number of employees that work across all venues. This will primarily affect young people, who are most at risk from unemployment in this state.

Entertainment within our venues would also be negatively impacted. We spent in excess of \$1,800,000 for the 2014 financial year on entertainment. For the current financial year (2015) we have budgeted to spend \$2,100,000 on entertainment. Entertainment is a crucial aspect of the success of our venues, with over 75% of this cost spent supporting local DJ's, bands and performers. The proposed changes would significantly reduce the expenditure on Entertainment and therefore affect the local industry of musicians. If the proposed lockout laws were introduced, our expenditure on entertainment would decrease by at least \$768,000 having a large effect on local musicians.

Family, and occasionally our other venues, host some of the biggest names in world music, and Brisbane would be a poorer place if we are forced to cut this investment.

The proposed changes are ignoring the most vital area of reducing the number of incidents that are related to intoxication. By far the biggest area that would have a significant impact at reducing the number of incidents is education. Education is key in making people aware of the ramifications of their actions and to change the culture of our youth. We have seen a large increase in the number of people that arrive into the Valley that are already intoxicated from pre loading. The discounting of liquor in off premise bottle shops make pre loading at home a very affordable option which allows people to drink readily before they go out with their friends.

We do not want to see the vibrancy and potential of this community be put at risk in any way. We have invested too much time, energy and spirit into the Valley, and have seen it develop into the great place it is today. Policy makers must listen to local business and community leaders when we say that this will irreparably damage the area, and the whole state, for years to come.

Sincerely

Matthew Gray
General Manager
Empire Holdings

