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Subject: ONLINE SUBMISSION - Alcohol-Related Violence in Queensland

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ONLINE SUBMISSION - Inquiry into alcohol-related violence

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Best practice harm minimisation measures:

A friendly police presence will work wonders. It would provide support for security staff and the vast majority of patrons who only want a pleasant night out.

The impact of late opening hours:

There is no problem with late hours, just with the troublemakers. Rather than reduce hours and impact on the venue and the well-behaved patrons, laws and strategies must target the offending individuals. Lockouts only create more trouble either in the streets or elsewhere. If you are going to have lockouts, police should back up security staff.

Flow-on issues for emergency service workers, police, and frontline health workers:

When Cairns Police's now discredited Operation Amazon was harassing Johnno's Blues Bar in 2006/2007, it was partly in response to rare fights that took place outside the premises on the reggae nights, sometimes well away from the premises. Fights inside the bar were rare and quickly dealt with by security. However, police blackmarked Johnno's. The real problem is that the Johnno's management sought the assistance of the police to prevent violence outside the premises. Johnno's identified the problem time and asked police to have a presence outside the club to deter any possible fighting. Police told them, "No, you are supposed to provide your own security." That is an unreasonable response for a police service dedicated to its community. In fact, a police presence would have prevented incidents and potentially saved police bookwork time, ambulance time, hospital resources. There needs to be a shake-up in the police service in Cairns.

Education campaigns and their role in cultivating effective social change in terms of community attitudes to alcohol consumption:

Nothing needs to change in drinking culture, because the majority of people do not drink much and do not misbehave on the grog. You have to focus on the troublemakers and target campaigns accordingly. I like a beer and your campaigns are lost on me because they don't apply to me. I'm glad to see the government talk about "individual responsibility". The present system of targeting and blaming licenced venues is unfair. They all generally abide by RSA, but it is humanly impossible to account for all drunks or drug users who come into a venue. Security staff and bar staff can often tell signs of intoxication and can screen people, but they are not doctors or psychiatrists, they are only human. Besides not all intoxicated people are troublemakers. Only a minority. If there are to be serious consequences it needs to be placed on individual offenders. Bans, curfews etc on individual offenders is the way to go rather than target venues.

The role of parents in influencing attitudes towards alcohol consumption:

Parents play a big role, but ultimately they have to trust their kids. Kids will always let down their parents at some stage. I think Caroline da Costa's description of the process a brain goes through when it is being damaged should be explained to young people. See Caroline's book, "Clone Baby".

The economic cost of alcohol-related violence:

Police should be more supportive of their communities and less anti-community. What they do at the coal face can save a lot of grief for other services.

Any other Comments:

In 2006 a drink driver was picked up at Edmondton. He told police he had been drinking in Johnno's Blues Bar. This resulted in Johnno's getting a black mark against its name. This was not only extremely unreasonable, but does absolutely nothing to improve drinker behaviour. If a driving ban on the driver was not enough, then police should have sought a ban on the bloke for drinking. Individual bans and curfews on individuals is the way to go. By targeting the individual, he will not be able to join his mates for a night out. Venues will be able to help by keeping out banned drinkers. However, they can't be responsible for serving him if they don't detect he is on the ban register and this needs to be understood. Police should seek cooperation from venues over bans and provide support. The effectiveness of the ban is that police will be aware of the person/s and be able to extend bans if a ban is violated. One of the problems with Cairns police is their entrenched racism such as is the case with the Homelands Program. By banning whole groups of people from venues the problem is only removed to the suburban streets and homes well away from security staff, security cameras and a police presence. The rise in alcohol-related crime and violence is a direct result of racism in Cairns police. By closing down venues such as Johnno's and Tropo's, police actually worsened the situation. Any campaign against alcohol-related violence has to target the individual offender and ostracise them from the

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licenced venues and cut them off from their groups. The other cause of rising crime in Cairns was the unfair harassment of venues and forcing their closure. For some reason, they associated crime with live music. Johnno's was a pleasant and enjoyable venue that provided an outlet for young people in music bands. Live music provided interaction between the musicians and the public and this was a good thing that maintained good relations. By closing down Johnno's, the only venues left in Cairns are overcrowded venues with loud DJ doof-doof music. The corrupt nature of Operation Amazon was that it turned a blind eye to these venues where violence was commonplace. Of course, the real reason Johnno's was closed down was because the then Mayor Kevin Byrne asked police to close it down because of his interest in the Trilogy development across the road. The nightclubs the police turned a blind eye too were well inside the CBD. Yes, police think they were smart for closing down Johnno's (because of live music and its indigenous patronage on reggae nights) and Tropo's (for its indigenous patronage), but they weren't so smart because alcohol-related crime has risen in the CBD. And the offenders now are all white people, drugged up and drunk from the doof-doof bars.