

The Research Director  
Law Justice and Safety Committee  
Parliament House, Brisbane 4000.

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## Submission

My specific comment relates to recent government reaction in response to vicious assaults (so called glassings) in hotels, where a drinker smashes a glass into another drinker.

Then I want to relate in general terms my experience of suffering as a resident within an area adjacent to one of the Woolworths extended company hotels at Noosaville.

Firstly, in regard to the Queensland Government's move to force a change from glass to plastic drinking vessels.

Whilst a demonstrated need to take this action exists in the interest of public safety, the fact that there is a need, clearly sounds a warning of unacceptable licencing practice.

There is of course more to it than swapping plastic for glass. There is always the possibility of chairs, knives, forks or billiard cues.

Those who operate these establishments must take more responsibility for management of their licenced premises.

Attacks happen because people are drunk and out of control. They are drunk and out of control because the commercial interests of hotel managers are served by selling as much as patrons want. Then they become a problem to the extent that they are out of control and tipped out to become a community concern for hospitals and emergency service personnel.

In my experience, a *blood house* reputation is earned by the way licenced premises are managed, glassings and other bad behavior result from careless management and unacceptable licencing practice.

Accordingly, if we are to have extended licencing hours then a capacity to provide safe and well managed premises is essential. Clearly, this is not the case and until it is, extended licences should be withdrawn.

Particularly in regard to extended licences, forfeiture should quickly follow any demonstrated incapacity to maintain high standards.

It seems to me that if licenced premises are required to have plastic drinking vessels (so that glass cannot be used to inflict grievous harm by one patron on another), it follows that appropriate reduction of licencing hours is in the public interest.

And secondly, observations detailed here are documented from regular instances of drunken, destructive and violent patrons discharged into the local residential community following current 3am closing at the Villa Noosa Hotel, located in Mary Street, Noosaville.

Neighbouring residents are regularly subjected to undue offence, annoyance and disturbance created by patrons leaving the Villa Noosa.

Particularly following 3am closing on Saturday/Sunday mornings, residents have come to expect drunken fighting, loud violent noise, urinating/vomiting in our gardens, broken trees and shrubs both within private gardens and public areas.

In the warmer months it is offensive to find drunks sleeping into the daylight hours of late morning where they have collapsed in our gardens and frequently surrounded by their bodily excretions.

These issues have been the subject of several complaints to both Liquor Licencing and police.

Examples include:

- a young woman lying unconscious at the Villa main entrance;
- a very drunk man ejected from the Villa who staggered across Mary Street (traffic had to stop to avoid running him over) and urinated into gardens at doctor's rooms in Edward Street (penis clearly visible to children playing in the street nearby). He finally found his way into my neighbour's private garden (police were called twice and to my knowledge failed to attend);
- Trees vandalized;
- Rubbish bins constantly tipped over;
- Drug dealings in lanes and car parks;
- Council property vandalized;
- Local BP Servo installation of night service infrastructure to protect staff mainly from Villa patrons;
- Real Estate property signs trashed;
- The "wedding from hell" is well documented.

Liquor licencing staff have been quick to redirect me to the role of police in attending to drunken behaviour in the street (*talk to police - not us*). The problem for residents is that drunkenness fits a low priority in terms of police response, particularly when other more serious demands on police time are made during the early morning hours when rostering police numbers may be difficult (we really have no proactive police coverage in terms of response to drunken nuisance).

From a causative viewpoint, Villa management has displayed an arrogant disregard to community well being in suffering drunken patrons. Their bottom line business is clearly selling ever increasing quantities of alcohol. Patrons are simply encouraged to fill up with booze then are tipped out at 3am into surrounding residential areas.

Proactively eliminating this nuisance by limiting trading hours makes more sense than resorting to a secondary police response (which may or may not occur depending on demands for police time).

Either way, residents are victimized by the licensee's business operations and frequently fail to secure adequate police protection.

Licencing considerations should therefore take into account the logistical capacity of police to maintain public order within the times involved.

## **Push towards 5am closing**

Any consideration of 5am closing situations should have regard to the expected clash of interest involved between post 5am drunken hotel patrons and recreational dog walkers, joggers, bike riders in our streets.

Drunks will migrate from earlier closing establishments for a *top up* prior to 5am.

## **History**

In local terms, nuisance generated by the Villa can fluctuate, usually in response to complaints. Management have reacted to enforcement response by employing extra security, off duty police, busing people out, sacking a manager with a view to appeasing authorities and providing responsible service training to staff.

This always turns out to be short lived relief, with street behaviour degenerating quickly within the next few weeks.

In short, Villa management in their reach for profits has created a high level of distrust within the local community and cannot be trusted to manage any late closure licence.

## **MGW Hotels Trevor Smith**

In a telephone conversation (June 25. 09) I asked the applicant's manager, Trevor Smith, why his company wanted a 5am licence and documented the following points:

- State Government charges recently imposed, dictate an economic need to "grow the business";
- 5am extension will be heavily conditioned so they would not extend full liquor service hours from 3am;
- MGW are ultimately concerned to gain a 5am extension to their gaming licence;
- The process involved in gaining an extension to the gaming licence requires MGW to first obtain a liquor licence extension to 5am;
- MGW has always been concerned to be a "good neighbour".

These assertions provide little comfort and raise even more concerns in regard to other aspects of community well being.

## **Conclusion**

The example of *Growing the business* in terms of the applicant's commercial interests, is focused on two very simple objectives. Firstly, sell more alcohol and secondly, increase gaming capacity.

Selling more alcohol compounds an already intolerable infringement of this communities reasonable expectation of a peaceful existence and causes more financial distress to those already at risk from their gaming operations.

Further expansion of either licencing or gaming operations is totally incompatible with residential social good order. The example here is typical, that MGW pursues a *thin end of the wedge* growth strategy at the expense of our community.

Nationally, there is conclusive evidence that purveyors of extended hours high turnover liquor, create a social menace. Accordingly, this submission asks you to provide leadership in correcting this serious threat to community well being.

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