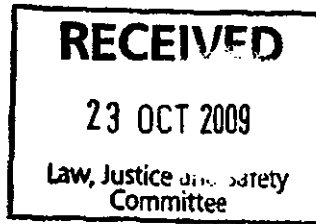


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Executive General Manager
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Your ref: 11.1.11c
Our ref: CCU-09-1332

Ms Barbara Stone MP
Chair
Law, Justice and Safety Committee
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000



Dear Ms Stone

I refer to your letter dated 3 September 2009 to Mr Lance Hockridge, QR Limited's (QR) Chief Executive officer inviting QR to comment on your Committee's *Inquiry Into Alcohol-Related Violence In Queensland*.

Unfortunately, QR Passenger Pty Ltd's (QR Passenger) customer service and train services staff are frequently required to manage intoxicated passengers.

QR Passenger security intelligence analysis has long demonstrated that alcohol-related security incidents occurring on the rail network are consistently higher on Friday and Saturday nights when alcohol consumption within the general population is greater.

Whilst some of these alcohol-related security incidents are basic behavioural offences, many of them escalate or have the potential to escalate into dangerous and violent situations for our staff.

In order to contribute to the Queensland Government's attempts to reduce alcohol-related violence, the following comments are provided for consideration. These comments are the views of QR Passenger and are independent of other submissions from the Queensland Government.

Best practice harm minimisation measures

QR Passengers' position is that the level of alcohol patrons are able to consume prior to being declared 'intoxicated' is too high.

By the time patrons are expelled from licensed premises due to excessive consumption of alcohol, they are already heavily intoxicated and most times, aggressive.

Inevitably, patrons expelled under these circumstances seek to travel by public transport, subjecting QR Passenger staff and other passenger's to potential harm.

QR Passenger recommends exploring the possibility of reducing the consumption of alcohol by limiting the amount of alcohol a patron can consume before they are declared 'intoxicated' by service staff.

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

QR Passenger frontline employees, including station staff, traincrew, transit officers and contracted security personnel are frequently confronted with intoxicated passengers. In these circumstances, passengers have generally come from licensed premises where they have participated in alcohol consumption and then used the rail network to get home.

Exacerbating these situations is the requirement to provide a level of protection to other, non-intoxicated passengers who are also subjected to the intoxicated passengers. In both cases, QR Passenger employees and passengers are placed at greater risk of a serious security incident, particularly assaults.

QR Passenger recommends introducing stronger penalties for those committing alcohol fuelled assaults, particularly those against transport or health workers.

For example, this could include amending *The Criminal Code* to reflect that an assault against a transport or health worker is classified as a serious assault, thereby warranting more substantial penalties.

QR Passenger would also recommend the flexibility to exclude passengers from travelling on the train should they demonstrate signs of intoxication on arrival at a station.

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

The current education strategies have not been effective in reducing the amount of alcohol-related violence occurring on the rail network.

Of particular concern is the prevalence of teenage alcohol consumption in or around train stations. It appears that it is accepted practice amongst teenage social groups to congregate around train stations where facilities are provided and they are 'less likely' to be questioned over their under-age drinking.

An education campaign targeting attitudes toward alcohol consumption needs to incorporate the illegalities of drinking on QR Passenger property.

The economic cost of alcohol-related violence

The prevalence of alcohol-related violence or alcohol-related security incidents within QR Passenger are such that the economic impacts can accrue to become substantial. Costs associated with this kind of behaviour for QR Passenger can be any of the following:

- costs associated with delays to services
- costs associated with lost time injury frequency rates for staff suffering physical or emotional trauma caused by alcohol-related violence
- damage to business reputation and subsequent loss of customers.

The perception of passengers as to how safe it is to travel on rail passenger transportation is often severely impacted by the presence of intoxicated individuals.

Feedback from customers demonstrates that many are hesitant to travel on the rail passenger network, particularly on Friday and Saturday nights, due to the perceived lack of safety created by intoxicated travellers.

It is also important to point out that there are other substantial costs that can be incurred due to alcohol-related violence occurring on the rail network.

The rail environment poses a number of unique safety risks for the travelling public. When alcohol is introduced to this environment, the potential for those safety risks to occur is substantially escalated.

Evidence across Australia demonstrates a number of individuals are either seriously injured or killed after coming onto the rail network whilst intoxicated.

QR Passenger would recommend a substantial increase in the fine penalties that can be given for alcohol-related violence. Increased fines would allow some restitution for the resources expended to deal with the alcohol-related security incidents.

Should you require any additional information regarding this submission, please do not hesitate to contact me

Yours sincerely



Paul Scurah

22 October 2009