

**LAW, JUSTICE AND SAFETY
COMMITTEE**

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**INQUIRY INTO ALCOHOL-
RELATED VIOLENCE IN
QUEENSLAND**

Written submission to:

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

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by:

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(This submission is made in a personal capacity)

BEST PRACTICE HARM MINIMISATION MEASURES.

Areas for comment:

1 Why do some individuals become violent offenders after consuming alcohol? What medical or psychological factors are involved?

I am not qualified to comment on the medical or psychological factors involved in individuals becoming violent in licenced venues. However, from experience and observation I suggest that many individuals (particularly males but not exclusively) become violent in the following situations:

- 1) *Overcrowded venues* – In overcrowded venues patrons can bump into other patrons and, if holding or carrying drinks, cause spillage of often expensive drinks especially on to clothes. Ironically this is more likely to occur if the patron is holding glasses or cans rather than glass bottles. The banning of glass in licensed venues may therefore create another series of problems.
- 2) *When requested to leave or being removed from premises* –When patrons are requested to leave they often question the authority of the person, usually a security provider, to make such a request. If a patron has questioned the authority of the provider or manager they are more likely to resist removal and become violent when or if they are physically removed form the premises as permitted or required under the Act.
- 3) *When refused further service* – In this situation a similar outcome to that described above occurs.

4) *Outside venues after closing time* – Many patrons leaving a venue at the same time, especially at closing time, can lead to skylarking, pushing, shoving and bumping resulting in some patrons becoming agitated, upset and possibly violent.

Recommendations for consideration

- Give senior security providers or managers the authority to issue on the spot fines or penalties for refusing to leave licenced premises or for resisting when being removed.
 - When a serious incident occurs in or near a venue political and civic leaders and police who comment in the media should ensure that their comments are balanced and that they also reflect on the patron's behaviour if they have refused to follow the request/instructions of the manager/security provider. In many recent incidents when violent incidents have occurred political leaders have focused their comments on the venue and its staff and security providers, with little or no comment on the patron's actions and their refusal to do as legitimately requested by venue staff and security providers. This does little to encourage compliance or to support the legitimate actions of security providers and venue staff who are performing their duties in accordance with the relevant Acts.
 - Political and civil leaders need to show leadership on this issue rather than making adverse statements about the industry which reflects poorly on the venue staff and security providers. It also does little to encourage recruitment of competent security providers and, in effect, may only serve to reinforce the unacceptable behaviour of a small number of patrons because there is no public comment on their unacceptable and often illegal behaviour.
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What Works? What doesn't Work?

Examples of public education campaigns that have worked are those relating to the wearing of seat belts, the wearing of bicycle helmets, drink driving, and littering. Although these education campaigns were not the only factor in changing public behaviour there is no doubt that it has been a significant contributing factor. What clearly hasn't worked is political and civic leaders and the media laying the blame for violence only on venues, their staff and security providers.

What might assist in the medium to long term is an education campaign funded from licence fees and aimed at informing the public and patrons of the requirements of the Liquor Act and the Security Providers Act and of the obligation and responsibilities those Acts place on both patrons and venue staff including security providers.

Venue overcrowding solutions include better internal design especially around toilets, service points and dance areas as well as entry controls.

In order to reduce overcrowding at exits and close of trade consideration should be given to requiring venues to have "close of trade" procedures. Also, consideration should be given to ceasing alcohol service 30 minutes before licensed trading ceases and maintaining the 30 minute grace period after trading ceases. This would give venues and patrons an hour to leave the premises without extending the current 30 minute grace period.

The impact of late opening hours

We suggest that late opening hours has not led to increased on-premises consumption. In fact there is some evidence to suggest that on-premises sales have declined in recent years accompanied by a significant increase in “take-away” sales. A consequence of this change in alcohol sales pattern, combined with extended trading hours, is that patrons consume their cheaper priced take away sales at home before heading out to an on-premises venue where they may consume very little alcohol or none at all or they may be refused entry in accordance with the provisions of the Act. However, the venue or, in some cases, the last venue they attend must carry all the responsibility and adverse criticism if a patron is involved in violent activity although several venues including take away venues may have actually contributed to the situation.

Consideration should be given to reducing the opening hours of take away venues and to their pricing policies.

What education campaigns are currently in place?

See comments under Best Practice harm minimisation measures.

Kevin John STAPLETON

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