

As a businessman in Townsville owning and operating a nightclub on Flinders Street East, this is my submission in response to the "Issues Paper August 2009, Inquiry into alcohol-related violence in Queensland."

It is my strong belief that this assembled committee will conduct this inquiry and only find more strategies that address the final outcomes from alcohol consumption instead of focusing on what actually addresses the causes and the components that equate to alcohol related violence.

It is my strong belief that these assemble committee members have very little if no experience in actually what happens in a hospitality business, have no idea the enormous pressures a hospitality business has to deal with on daily basis with Police and Liquor Licensing and some of the real issue that result in what they only see being the final outcome from alcohol instead of the cause.

I say this passionately because at the age of 36 and with more than 18 years experience in the hospitality industry where I have started at the bottom and worked my way up a position of being a successful hands on owner operator having learnt from working in such cities as Brisbane, Sydney and Townsville, I feel I have very important and critical points to raise for this inquiry.

Whilst the "Issues Paper August 2009, Inquiry into alcohol-related violence in Queensland" points out many very important topics of discussion and areas of concern that have to be addressed with the current environment surrounding alcohol and related violence, I wish to express views from a different angle in order to curb the concerning matters currently occurring.

REGULATING THE SELLING ALCOHOL RETAIL?

It is a fact that basically anyone of any age [teenagers included] and any sex can realistically obtain alcohol from any business that sells one of the many thousand variants of the product. Whilst all businesses receive liquor licenses to sell alcohol, there just isn't enough government regulation [by QUEENSLAND Police and QUEENSLAND Liquor Licensing] on rogue traders, strong enough penalties and enough pressure on businesses who conduct and trade in a way that promote the irresponsible selling and supply of alcohol.

All QUEENSLAND Hotels/pubs are allowed 3 retail bottle shops according to the QUEENSLAND Government and QUEENSLAND Liquor Licensing within a 10km radius of their position hotel/pub. This is just not necessary at all, in small towns like Townsville where the approx width of the town is 10/15km in diameter basically, pubs and hotel owners are putting bottle shops everywhere so people have easier access to be able to buy alcohol. The Government makes mammoth excise taxes on alcohol, so the more alcohol that is sold in QUEENSLAND, the more money the QUEENSLAND Government makes in revenue. This problem basically means that more bottle shops in the area is more opportunity for young people to purchase alcohol and drink at home, at parties, at BBQ's totally unregulated, without supervision and no responsible service of alcohol.

Solution - Drastically reduce the amount of retail bottle shops and drive thrus in QUEENSLAND by 50-75% quickly or reduce the limit to have either 1 bottle shop or 1 drive thru only for every hotel/pub [general hotel liquor license] in QUEENSLAND, therefore minimizing the opportunity for kids, teenagers and people to buy alcohol. Pretty simple!

HOW EASY IT ACTUALLY IS TO PURCHASE ALCOHOL RETAIL?

It is again too easy for people to drive through a hotel/pub drive thru or walk into a bottle shop and purchase ANY AMOUNT of alcohol they want if he/she has the money. These retail bottle shops and drive thrus operate

successfully on high turnover with very small margins; therefore selling as much alcohol as possible is the goal for each retail bottle shops and drive thru so a profit and successful business can be sustained.

Example: I have in the past [because we ran out of stock] purchase \$2000 worth of Vodka 1125ml bottles at 11.45pm at night from a local drive thru, no questions asked at all. Imagine what kids, teenagers and young generation are buying without anyone telling them, or restricting them or saying to them NO! It's too easy to purchase alcohol from hotel/pub drive thrus and walk in retail bottle shop's.

Solution - Reduce the trading hours [availability] of every hotel/pub drive thru and walk in retail bottle shop, limit the ability for people to buy large amounts of alcohol and an accountability system introduced for people under the age of 25 to have their ID scanned and documented and car registration recorded therefore creating accountability on the hotel/pub drive thru or walk in retail bottle shop if a car accident occurs, public nuisance occurs, etc. This will then allow the Police to track the outlet that sells the alcohol to the problem people and take action against premise that sell alcohol irresponsibly.

THE BASIC TIMELINE OF A YOUNG PERSON DRINKING?

It's pretty simple to work out that the majority of people start their night off sober and have to buy alcohol from somewhere! Once the alcohol is purchase however done, they there go to a location and start drinking. These locations are generally in private homes, parties, back decks, BBQ's, friend places, etc. From here the crowd may venture to a restaurant or café to eat and continue drinking. After eating, the crowd will then venture onto a bar, pub or hotel and then onto a late night trading premise logically being a nightclub. This is not hard to work out; this has been going on for years and years with people male and female.

Therefore all the drinking and consuming of alcohol the young people of today are doing before entering a licensed premise in QUEENSLAND is done in these unregulated, unsupervised and uncontrolled environments. None of these environments have security, have staff with RSA's, have security cameras, have experienced management and owners and have basic liquor licensing regulations and conditions. Nor should a man or women have these restriction in their own home, BUT again the very clear problem is young irresponsible kids, teenagers and people have the availability to drink and buy as much alcohol as they wish before heading into their local CBD or entertainment strip and place pressure on businesses selling alcohol.

Nightclubs are obviously that last destination in the timeline for the night for a young person, nightclubs are clearly the most heavily regulated businesses because of this fact and the problems associated with young people who can't consume alcohol responsibility. The vast majority of people generally go out to have fun, party, dance, pick up the opposite sex and have a great night. It's the small minority mainly causing the problems! And they continue to cause these problems because the penalties are way too light, the courts and judges aren't tough enough and there's no deterrent for them.

Solution – Make it harder for young people to buy alcohol and drink it at home and make the penalties, fines and jail time for alcohol abuse and associated effects dramatically higher!

US VERSUS THEM ATTITUDE ADOPTED BY THE QUEENSLAND POLICE

For many years, the QUEENSLAND Police have adopted a US verses THEM attitude within the industry when it comes to hotel, pub, restaurant, bar and nightclub owners. This poor attitude by the QUEENSLAND Police has divided and destroyed many real possible working relationships to address the same common problem for both

parties. Immediately without listening and talking to the business manager/owner, the QUEENSLAND Police in a majority of cases will automatically side with a young, inexperienced, intoxicated person rather than listen to the venue's point of view. Even if the Police listen to the venue's point of view and identify a problem person, the QUEENSLAND Police are tough enough and won't arrest the person causing the problem. I have seen on many occasion QUEENSLAND Police members talk to problem people and let them walk away. This generally results in them returning later to cause another drama for the business. It would be better if QUEENSLAND Police staff members actually wanted to be there in spirit and conduct their job passionately and look at the big picture when addressing an investigation. These alcohol related problem in the community will never improve or get resolved if this poor attitude is maintained.

Solution – Make Police officers of any rank accountable and responsible if complaints and enquiries arise from business owners about a lack of co-operation, lack of interest about an incident and attitude to respond to a business's enquiry about problem regarding alcohol and violence and problem people. Reward results and punish poor performance.

PENALTIES FOR PROBLEM PEOPLE NOT TOUGH ENOUGH

The QUEENSLAND Government, the courts and judges have allot to answer too and are responsible for with regards to applying penalties, fines and possible jail time to problem people and alcohol related violence and the associated problem with it. Simply put, there is no time for doing the crime in QUEENSLAND. People are allowed to get away with anything when it comes to alcohol related violence. IF the QUEENSLAND Government, QUEENSLAND Liquor Licensing, the courts, judges, and executive managers in charge of these government departments, collectively made a decision to create new laws, rules and regulation relating to the penalties of crime, violence and problem people from alcohol, then people would simply think before acting.

Solution – A person will stop or only do it only once if they were to receive a large intimidating fine like \$3000 to \$5000 with possible jail term along with criminal conviction instead of a measly \$300 fine. These are NO punishment in place for problem people in the community that are affecting and cause alcohol related crimes and violence.

LIQUOR LICENSING QUEENSLAND

Liquor Licensing Queensland needs a major shakeup! Staff in the department can't even respond to enquiries, complaints and awareness email relating to rouge traders within the industry. Proactive business owners like me can't even make head way with the Liquor Licensing because again a very negative us versus them attitude.

As an example, I sent an email to a high up Liquor Licensing Manager in Queensland about my thoughts and experience and ways to help assist Flinders Street East and making everyone [business selling alcohol] accountable for contributing to street security to allow for more and better monitoring of the street to make it safer and cheaper for everyone, and I didn't even get a reply. I sent the same email to a member of QUEENSLAND Police, again no reply! This is a prime example of the limited attitude and poor work ethic of the Liquor Licensing and QUEENSLAND Police.

As another example, I notified a member of QUEENSLAND Police involved with monitoring licensed venue about a rogue trader doing promotions that are completed contradicting the QUEENSLAND Liquor Licensing website which states what's allowed and what's not allowed. Still to this day, this venue in question is doing the same Friday afternoon promotion which encourages the excessive consumption of alcohol over a short period [start and stops within 2 hours, happy hour] of time where a drink special is in place.

Solution – Again make Liquor Licensing Officer and Police officers of any rank completely accountable and responsible if complaints and enquiries arise from business owners about a lack of co-operation, lack of interest about an incident and a poor attitude to respond to a business owners or managers enquiry about problems rogue business operators. Reward results and punish poor performance.

RTD'S [READY TO DRINK]

RTD's are the poison of the hospitality industry. The only thing these evil products promote and drive is QUEENSLAND Government excise taxes and higher liquor wholesaler's profits. These prepackaged drinks, labeled very cleverly and made to taste sweet and refreshing along promote alcohol drinking more to the younger market of today. Well educated business owner hate these drinks because for us to make reasonable profits out of these drinks, we have to price extraordinary high, but because these drinks are the highest selling products in hotel/pub drive thrus or walk in bottle shop's, their demand is high at on-premise licensed venue's, therefore making us buy these product to stay competitive within the market to keep up with competition. These drinks are always consumed more in quantity than the standard drink being served by a RSA employed staff member and these drinks are specifically targeted to young female drinks. For me RTD's have completely destroyed the industry, it's only taught young people to drink sweet drinks faster in brightly colored well packaged bottles.

Solution – Take a massive bold step in the industry and de-regulate the RTD market, limit the product in types of RTD's, reduce the alcohol volume on every RTD, enforce packaging and bottle restraints and force the market place to buy more beers, wines and spirits served at normal reasonable serving. Even put restraints on licensed venue's serving RTD's and place tight restrictions on hotel/pub drive thrus and walk in bottle shop selling the product. E.g. when was the last time a person in Australia got into an alcohol related violence incident drinking West Coast Cooler [probably Australia's first RTD]?

RESTAURANTS TRADING AS BARS AND NIGHTCLUBS!

QUEENSLAND Liquor Licensing has allot to answer too and is responsible for allowing small restaurants in QUEENSLAND basically trading as small adapt nightclubs and/or very busy bars when the primary purpose of a restaurant is to sell food predominately. These small adapt nightclubs and/or very busy bars are only fueling the timeline more when people can consume more alcohol in an environment without regulations, laws, conditions, security costs, CCTV camera costs and compliance costs associated with being a nightclub.

QUEENSLAND Liquor Licensing should giving these restaurants an ultimatum on whether they want to be a nightclub and inherit all the regulations, laws, conditions, security costs, CCTV camera costs and compliance costs associated with being a nightclub and only selling alcohol to large quantities of people in small confined space or just being a restaurant and primarily only selling food.

No restaurant needs to stay open past midnight, if they are, they are not a restaurant. All wedding, function, etc at any facility almost always finish at midnight. Again these massive problems in the industry are a result of QUEENSLAND Liquor Licensing and the QUEENSLAND Government not controlling the licenses that sell alcohol therefore again contributing to and resulting in alcohol related violence.

The introduction of a small 60 person bar license will absolutely destroy the market place and only promote binge drinking more. No one can reasonable say that a 60 person bar can sustain long term profitability and become a viable business. Who will monitor this, Liquor Licensing can't even answer emails about complaints made from

proactive businessmen in the industry. This will only result in more competition and assist in driving down the prices on drinks and the demand is spread out more.

Restaurants came into existence throughout the medieval Islamic world before doing so in China. The Islamic world had "*restaurants where one could purchase all sorts of prepared dishes.*"

Solution – All dedicated restaurants must be shut by midnight and their primary focus must be selling a majority of food every day of the year. Anyone caught trading as a small adapt nightclub and/or very busy bar should have their license revoked for 1 year with tough penalties. Liquor Licensing should be heavily targeting these problem venues and addressing these issues seriously.

In summary, I am very passionate about the hospitality industry and am very focused on being a responsible successful business owner selling alcohol. I strongly feel that the QUEENSLAND Government doesn't really know how to handle the situation and is only driven by revenue, fees and excise taxes from the liquor industry.

This would be a great time and opportunity to make distinct changes, create a path for a better future with young people and their ways of viewing alcohol and responsibilities along buying it, consuming it and what happens if you abuse it.

Somebody somewhere in government needs to stand tall, make a point and follows this aggressively. This is the only way to curb alcohol related violence in Queensland.

It would honestly not surprise me if this document was over looked because of the true outlooks I have described and how much work it would take to make change.

I would be very happy to come and discuss my thoughts and provide my experience to anyone willing to make an effort to curb alcohol related violence in QUEENSLAND.

Regards,

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