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Law, Justice and Safety  
Committee

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**Submission**

on

**Alcohol-related violence in Queensland**

to the

**Law, Justice and Safety Committee**

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# 1. Introduction

On 4 August 2009 the Legislative Assembly asked the Law, Justice and Safety Committee to conduct an inquiry into alcohol-related violence, with a focus on community safety and preventative measures to reduce levels of alcohol-related violence.

In undertaking this inquiry, the Committee is asked to consider –

- best practice harm minimisation measures in other Australian and international jurisdictions, including specific measures such as restrictions on use of glass;
- the impact of late opening hours on incidences of alcohol-related violence;
- the flow-on issues for emergency service workers, police, and front-line health workers of alcohol-related violence;
- education campaigns and their role in cultivating effective social change in terms of community attitudes to alcohol consumption;
- the role of parents in influencing the attitudes of young Queenslanders towards alcohol consumption; and
- the economic cost of alcohol-related violence.

The Committee has called for public submissions which are due by Friday 23 October 2009. The Committee is to report to the Legislative Assembly by 18 March 2010 and will provide an interim report to the Assembly by 26 November 2009.

## 2. Late opening hours and outlet density

There is evidence that late opening hours can be a significant factor in the incidence of alcohol-related violence.

A study of Perth hotels comparing the incidence of assaults in those hotels that were given an extended trading permit for an extra hours trading until 1 am with those hotels that closed at midnight found that:

*“After controlling for the general trend in assaults occurring throughout Perth hotels, there was a significant increase in monthly assault rates for hotels with late trading following the introduction of extended trading licenses. This relationship was largely accounted for by higher volumes of high alcohol content beer, wine and spirits purchased by late trading hotels.”<sup>1</sup>*

Studies in Brazil, Canada, Iceland and the United Kingdom have also found that changes in alcohol-related harm have followed changes to trading hours.<sup>2</sup>

There is also evidence, from research in Melbourne, of a significant link between outlet density and alcohol-related violence, with packaged liquor outlets consistently associated with violence in suburban areas and general (hotel) and on-premise (nightclubs, restaurants, and bars) licenses associated with violence in inner-city and inner-suburban areas.<sup>3</sup>

This finding is consistent with similar findings from research conducted in Norway and in California.<sup>4</sup>

The Queensland government has wisely announced a moratorium on applications for extended trading hours by liquor outlets. However, it is proposed that *“the legislation will allow the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation to consider applications on an exceptional basis for extended trading hours, within the moratorium period, but only in a limited number of designated areas. These specific areas will potentially be limited to inner city areas which have a concentration of venues already operating with extended trading hours.”*<sup>5</sup>

In the light of the evidence for a link between outlet density and violence the proposal that exceptions may be made precisely for areas that already have a concentration of venues with extended trading hours seems to be ill-advised.

***Recommendation 1:***

*Legislation should be amended to reduce the availability of extended trading hours.*

***Recommendation 2:***

*Legislation should be amended to facilitate a reduction of outlet density for all types of liquor outlets.*

***Recommendation 3:***

*In relation to the moratorium, the Committee should make an early recommendation to the government that no exceptions be allowed for applications for extended trading for outlets in areas which already have a concentration of venues with extended trading hours.*

### **3. Interventions at particular venues**

Wiggers *et al.* have reported on an Alcohol Linking Program trialled in the Hunter region of New South Wales. The program involved collection of data by police linking assaults and other incidence of violence to the venue at which alcohol was last consumed. Venue managers are provided with feedback reports and police visit those venues with the highest risk to conduct an audit of responsible service and management practices.

*Over a 3-month follow-up period there was a 15% greater reduction in alcohol-related incidents associated with premises that received the feedback/audit approach compared to those that received normal policing.*<sup>6</sup>

The continued service of alcohol to intoxicated patrons is a contributing factor to alcohol-related harms, including violence, with such patrons more likely to become either perpetrators or victims of violence.<sup>7</sup>

Significant reduction of this contributory factor may require more effective policing.

*Enforcement of laws has a deterrent effect on future offending by an individual and on offending by others. Similarly, fear of enforcement of laws can also positively impact on offending. To reduce offending by either means it is important that action is taken for breaches of liquor laws. An increased police presence in licensed drinking environments will deter offending by creating fear of apprehension (if deviance were to occur) and reinforcing the belief that laws will be enforced.*

*A visible police presence also enables improved communication between licensed venue operators and staff. If this communication is approached in a positive manner there can be*

*valuable information sharing. This information may ...enable improved responses to intoxicated patrons by staff [and] lead to changes in the social and physical drinking environment.*

*An improved relationship between police and licensed venue operators requires a proactive police presence. However, an increased presence should be guided by intelligence data to optimise the use of finite police resources, and to avoid unfairly or inappropriately targeting licensees.<sup>8</sup>*

#### **4. Other venue-related matters**

Nicholas reports on other venue-related matters that impact on alcohol-related violence.<sup>9</sup>

These include the role of crowd controllers. A Canadian study found that in 67% of incidences of violence in which crowd controllers played a role their role was “bad” or “ugly”. Nicholas proposes that:

*Given the very important role that crowd controllers play in the prevention and management of alcohol-related violence in and around licensed premises, enhanced training and regulation seems well justified.*

Other matters considered include overcrowding, lighting, availability of food and pool tables (associated with violence, mainly triggered by other patrons bumping pool cues). These are all factors that should be considered before licensing new premises.

#### **5. Alcohol advertising and alcohol consumption**

A recent review of seven international research studies concluded: “The data from these studies suggest that exposure to alcohol advertising in young people influences their subsequent drinking behaviour. The effect was consistent across studies, a temporal relationship between exposure and drinking initiation was shown, and a dose response between amount of exposure and frequency of drinking was demonstrated.”<sup>10</sup>

An American study compared data on alcohol consumption from two large exhaustive studies of youth behaviour with prevalence of alcohol advertising in local markets.<sup>11</sup> The economic analysis revealed that alcohol advertising - the majority of which is aimed at consumers of beer and liquor, not wine - has a positive effect on whether youth drink at all and on how much young people imbibe; that is, it encourages underage drinking. The relationship is especially pronounced for underage female drinkers.

The analysis suggested that the complete elimination of alcohol advertising could reduce adolescent monthly alcohol participation from about 25 percent to about 21 percent. For binge participation, the reduction might be from about 12 percent to about 7 percent.

Another American study found that youth who saw more alcohol advertisements drank more on average, each additional advertisement seen increasing the number of drinks consumed by 1%.

The study also found that youth in markets with greater alcohol advertising expenditures drank more - each additional dollar spent per capita increasing the number of drinks consumed by 3%. Youth in markets with more alcohol advertisements showed increased drinking levels into their late 20s, whereas drinking plateaued in the early 20s for youth in markets with fewer advertisements. Based on the study results, a 20-year-old male who saw few alcohol ads and lived in a media market with minimal advertising expenditures per capita was predicted to have nine alcoholic drinks in the past

month, compared to 16 drinks in the past month if he saw many ads. A 20-year-old male living in a media market with the highest ad spending per capita was predicted to have 15 drinks if he reported little ad exposure and 26 drinks if he saw many ads.

A recent study of the impact of alcohol advertising on teenagers in Ireland found:<sup>12</sup>

- Alcohol advertisements were identified as their favourites by the majority of those surveyed.
- Most of the teenagers believed that the majority of the alcohol advertisements were targeted at young people. This was because the advertisements depicted scenes – dancing, clubbing, lively music, wild activities - identified with young people.
- The teenagers interpreted alcohol advertisements as suggesting that alcohol is a gateway to social and sexual success and as having mood-altering and therapeutic properties.

A UK report noted that “UK expenditure on alcohol advertising rose from £150 million to £250 million annually between 1989 and 2000, and over that period the correlation between advertising expenditure and mean weekly alcohol consumption by children aged 11-15 years was very high (R=0.995).”<sup>13</sup>

A World Health Organisation review observed that:<sup>14</sup>

“Exposure to repeated high-level alcohol promotion inculcates pro-drinking attitudes and increases the likelihood of heavier drinking. Alcohol advertising predisposes minors to drinking well before legal age of purchase. Indeed, advertising has been found to promote and reinforce perceptions of drinking as positive, glamorous and relatively risk-free.

“Legislation restricting alcohol advertising is a well-established precaution used by governments throughout the world, despite opposition from the alcoholic beverage industry. Some bans are partial, applying only to spirits, to certain hours of television viewing or to state-owned media. These bans often operate alongside codes of self-regulation that govern permitted forms of alcohol advertising.

“Although many countries have restricted alcohol advertising to various degrees, the evaluation findings suggest that while the restrictions have not achieved a major reduction in drinking and related harms in the short term, countries with greater restrictions on advertising have less drinking and fewer alcohol-related problems.

“Despite industry claims that they adhere to codes of responsible advertising, the detrimental influences of marketing practices are not addressed adequately by industry self-regulation. Self-regulation tends to be fragile and largely ineffective. These codes may work best where the media, advertising and alcohol industries are all involved, and an independent body has powers to approve or veto advertisements, rule on complaints and impose sanctions.”

***Recommendation 4:***

***The Queensland government should work with the Commonwealth government, and with other state and territory governments, towards further significant restrictions on advertising of alcohol in all media.***

## 6. Endnotes

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