

Alex Douglas MP

Member for Gaven



20 October 2009

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Law, Justice and Safety
Committee

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

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Inquiry into alcohol-related violence

Alcohol-related violence is a complex issue that has a significant impact on the community, particularly on the Gold Coast. This is a matter that has garnered a of media attention in recent years and has prompted a number of research papers. Many commentators have offered causes of alcohol-related violence and others have championed simplistic solutions.

Media coverage and research papers into this matter suggest that alcohol-related violence is a complex matter, which involves a wide range of people and causes. This is often used as an excuse for difficulties in policing alcohol related violence. It is also common for licensed premises and clubs to be stigmatized and vilified for their perceived role in alcohol related violence.

I do not accept that lockouts have been successful as the ultimate panacea for alcohol related violence. Rather I believe the requirement to shut out all further patrons after a particular hour has actually exacerbated the problems. Equally, I believe the recently proposed excessive fees and charges to be imposed on the licensed premises are completely ill-conceived, greedy and in all likelihood self-defeating.

It is my opinion that Dr Gillian McIlwain's report, commissioned by then Premier Peter Beattie, is still the leading research piece on alcohol-related violence and it should be used as a foundation for any proposed solution.

Any policy on this matter should take into account a number of factors including -

- the behaviours and attitudes of people consuming alcohol
- the offenders' and their victims' ages and reasons for attending licensed premises
- the licensed premises
- the location and time of offences
- police involvement
- ~~relative social problems~~
- effects the policy may have on financial considerations and employment

In many cases of alcohol related violence, the following three points are a factor. The offenders are often repeat offenders, the offences occur late at night and the offenders have often been in another hotel but not in a club such as an RSL. There are three common features of the attacks – aggression, alcohol and opportunity. The offenders are generally men aged 20 to 29-years-old, under the influence of alcohol and other mixed drugs, such as stimulants and amphetamines. The altercations generally begin with a verbal exchange.

The drinkers who are the problem group are out late between 10pm to 3am. They are consuming amphetamines, stimulants and strong alcohol. This increases impulsivity and decreases their threshold to violence.

Of this group 11 % have reported drug use on presenting to hospital, 20.7% have a criminal record, 7.6% have been to prison, 26.2% have given illicit drugs to another individual, 14% had committed property crimes, 14% had committed physical crime, 17.3% had been physically violent to another individual while under the effect of alcohol, while 7.6% were physically violent to others while under the influence of drugs.

The attacks mostly occur in venues, as a quick assault usually to the face, head or neck of the victim. The offender generally leaves the premises quickly, and was often unknown to victim before the altercation. The violence generally starts with a verbal exchange and becomes violent during the peak time of 11pm and 3am. In glassing attacks the victim is generally subject to just one blow.

I believe zero tolerance is the best option in dealing with this group. In a prison environment, when detox, strict clear enforced rules and food is combined, there are no problems. Everyone has a good time. I have looked after young people in prison for many years and I believe it is no different to management in party areas.

I intend to leave the police discussion up to others.

I claim no expert knowledge all of the groups of people that attend Surfers Paradise clubs and licensed premises and the issues there intimately. Surfers Paradise at night is a party place. It differs from Runaway Bay, Southport, Broadbeach, Burleigh and Coolangatta in that all types of people from young adults to middle age people tend to go there. They must have some money because it is relatively expensive to have any kind of night out. Surfers Paradise is a seasonal place, with certain times of the year attracting different people and tourist groups. In the other coastal destinations, my understanding is that Coomera links to Runaway Bay, Mudgeeraba and Robina, which links to Burleigh and Broadbeach, Palm Beach and Elanora links to Coolangatta, but for a big night out all head for Surfers Paradise.

Students and tourists, especially overseas tourists, go to Surfers Paradise too. There is evidence that gangs prey on some of these groups. The attacks on the tourists who become victims of violence seem to fall between random and targeted attacks. More research should be conducted into the triggers for the random attacks with CCTV footage of incidents at clubs examined.

Likewise the demographics of people drinking at the clubs could be used to paint a clearer picture of the problem. With almost all venues requiring identification on entry, and many licensed premises recording identification supplied, it may be possible to determine where a person has been drinking through recorded identification details.

“Glassings” are an international problem. There were 77,800 attacks in the United Kingdom in 2008 but there has also been a massive increase in stabbings in and out of clubs, hotels and nightclubs in the UK. This spike in violence has not occurred in Queensland yet but we need to be prepared if it should occur here too. It should be assumed that almost all late night nightclub patrons on the Gold Coast have both alcohol and drugs in their system.

I doubt the widespread use of polychromate glasses will stop all glassings from occurring but evidence from overseas suggests it is better than tempered glass and it should lead to a massive reduction in incidents. The effect of the requirement to use polychromate cups in venues will have to be considered over some time. There is evidence the material has uncontrolled fatigue, can shatter into large shards and can be dangerous as a weapon too.

The obvious conclusion is to collect identification, to form a clearer picture of the demographics who are coming and going. This must be done constantly.

Another area that needs to be addressed is the behaviour of staff at licensed venues. Claims of overly vigorous restraint by security staff is an issue that must be addressed. We must eliminate bkie gangs from ownership and involvement in security firms. The registration of operators and all staff details should be reviewed often to ensure no offenders or people ineligible of holding a security license are falling through the cracks.

Likewise, proactive efforts should be made to addressing concerns about some club staff's involvement in the drug trade and failures to follow responsible service of alcohol laws. Suspicion of involvement in distributing drugs, failing to check identification or failing to abide by responsible service of alcohol laws should be investigated thoroughly. Staff found guilty of these offences could be named on a black list which could prevent further employment in the industry for a set time.

The venues throughout Surfers Paradise and their licensees appear to be quite varied, which is a positive thing. Again, proactive action in monitoring drug usage on the premises and adherence to responsible service of alcohol laws is required. The proper resourcing of Liquor Licensing officers to allow for more regular inspections may help improve the standards at venues. Restricting the number of venues may also be a sensible option.

One cannot change Surfers, besides improve lighting and installing more CCTVs. Residents who live in nearby buildings have to understand Surfers Paradise is not just a residential area and that night clubs are part of its attraction. Surfers Paradise's night clubs, bars and restaurants trade at night seven days each week and a degree of noise will always occur, but the violence and crime should not have to be tolerated.

Zero tolerance seems to be the way forward. There should be a \$500 fine for offenders, if a patron is ordered to leave a venue and does not. There should be also be a fine for the licensee if venue staff fail to make a disorderly patron leave promptly. There must be at least a small cover charge and a better dress code for patrons to nightclubs.

Lockouts should be stopped, with the focus instead put on moving patrons out of Surfers Paradise and back home. As such, the practice of clubs and hotels offering courtesy buses to Surfers Paradise should be curtailed and night rider buses home implemented. Surfers Paradise is an entertainment precinct but it has to be promoted as a great place to have fun with friends safely.

In areas outside Surfers Paradise and major niteclub zones elsewhere.

Alcohol in general is too cheap. It is too widely available especially after 9.00pm at night. The taxes on alcohol are not high enough. Beer in bottles is cheaper than water and more widely available. Distilled spirits are also too cheap.

Alcopops are not the problem. Young people were switching immediately after price increases (now removed) to small bottles of distilled spirit and soft drinks. They are now drinking more alcohol and less soft drink. Previously the soft drink component filled them up and the alcohol component was less.

Young people cannot handle excessive alcohol especially, as they take party drugs with it, because it is cheaper to get a high. In fact even party drugs are too cheap and that is why some are doubling up on them.

Domestic violence, interpersonal violence, traffic accidents leading to death, drownings, random accidents, chronic ill health, homelessness, death from suicide are all the results of the problem of excessive alcohol fuelled activities.

There are too many liquor outlets. Coles with 79 hotels, Woolworths 110 have too great a stronghold in Queensland in major markets especially big urban city and regional areas. Their distribution capacity and pricing is too successful.

There are at least 3 other liquor outlets for each hotel. Too many take-aways are being allowed especially at night, especially without ID and no volume restriction. That is 6 packs only not whole 24 "slab" box buys.

There is a continuing issue with "happy hours" of drinking subsidies by hotels especially the chain owned groups. Young people are filling up with alcohol in the suburbs then moving by bus, courtesy bus or taxi into the nightclub regions.

Employers are working more 30 and under people up to midnight on late shifts so young people are just going out after work for fun before they go to bed. There must be a reduction in supermarket trading after 8.00pm on Thursdays through to Sunday.

The Minister's proposal of a summit seems like a good idea but there has been too much talk and too little in the way of outcomes.

Yours sincerely



Dr Alex Douglas MP
State Member for Gaven

Your SOS solutions

The Gold Coast Bulletin has had hundreds of responses since the Save Our Surfers campaign was launched last week. Readers have offered



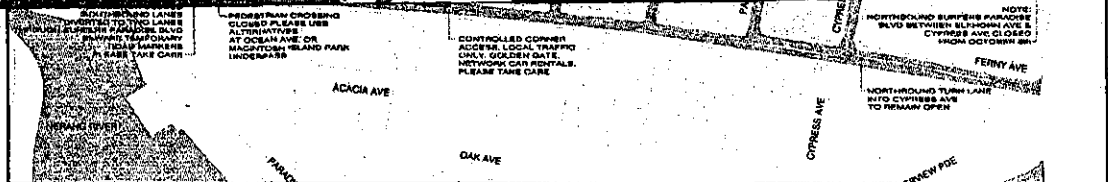
Your say

Wind back the drinking hours

I COMMEND *The Gold*

else). Clubs must be made to stop serving alcohol to people already drunk. The suggestion of special security officers to assist police, like in Auckland, sounds like a good idea. There must be severe penalties for glassing. People who do this must spend a long time in jail - JT

they would have something to complain about. More beat police, 24-hour lock-up, on-the-spot paperwork next day with up to \$500 fine or weekend detention or both, take their driving licence, hit them where it hurts. It's only a few. Don't put us all in the one basket. - John, Surfers



Gold Coast City Council and the Department of Transport and Main Roads wish to advise of traffic changes through Surfers Paradise in preparation for the Nikon SuperGP.

Legend

- Roadways open to general traffic.
- Roadways closed to general traffic. Construction vehicles only allowed in these areas.

Traffic diversions will be in place before and after the main event for the installation and removal of track infrastructure.

On Wednesday, 14 October 2009, night works will be undertaken to implement stage 2 of the traffic plan.

Due to these traffic arrangements, delays can be expected. Please seek alternative routes or use public transport.

For traffic updates, log on to www.131940.qld.gov.au or phone 13 19 40.

For public transport information, log on to www.translink.com.au or phone 13 12 30.

For more information about Nikon SuperGP traffic diversions, log on to www.supergp.com or phone (07) 5588 6800.



Queensland Government

TMP 0070359

Internet readers speak out

THE root cause of any issue of drunken violence et al, be it SP or Hong Kong, is the attitude of each changing generation to social values and responsibilities. Fix that and you fix the anti-social behaviour the SP issue is attracting. Or perhaps the anti-social behaviour is the norm society has moved to. Change the physical infrastructure all you might but until

you change the mindset of all of the participants, business owners included, nothing will ever change. - Demac

BUILD a church, temple and a mosque on Orchid Ave. That should solve the issue.

THE answer is soooooo simple, make the club precinct a light beer zone. They did it at sporting venues and it stopped the problems instantly! At sporting

venues, either people drink low (very low) alcohol or they are not admitted. Guess what, it works! Move the 'No Alcohol Zone' signs from the streets to inside the clubs and ... wa la ... no drunks, no glassings, no deaths, no king-hits! Oh, I forgot, no revenue for government or council. Sorry ... Scrap that idea, back to the drawing board. - Leslie Braun

**Sustaining a Reduction of
Alcohol-Related Harms in
the Licensed Environment:
*A Practical Experiment
to Generate New Evidence***

WORKING TITLE

**Sustaining a Reduction of Violence
in the Licensed Environment**

*Submission #111
included a copy of
this report.

**Dr. Gillian McIlwain
Professor Ross Homel**

**Key Centre for Ethics, Law, Justice & Governance,
Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia**

**March 2009
Brisbane, Australia**