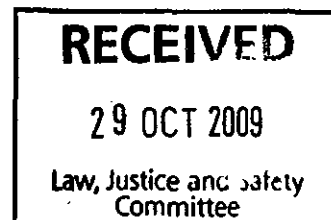


In this submission I am hoping to provide comment and question strategies already in place, while providing the nucleus for new ideas. It is not because my constituents have all the answers they need to know that all options are on the table and that those things that are not working will be dropped. My community has seen an escalating problem rather than a problem being managed, despite all the attention focused on a solution.

I have broken this submission into 4 key areas.



1. Youth Violence
2. Alcohol
3. What have we done so far
4. Have we considered.....

1. Youth Violence

Youth Violence appears to be escalating and for the purpose of this submission youth means up to 30 years old.

The issue seems to be getting worse, instead of better. This is in spite of all the media, police and political will being brought to bare on the issue. Every weekend, young people are bashed, in the streets, in clubs, at transport terminals. Many more cases go unreported, a hospital emergency ward on the week end sees many hundreds of incidents that don't make the statistics. There is an old saying that 'if you can't count it, you cant manage it'. Has the committee included research to really capture the magnitude of the problem, or is it continuing to use police stats? Has the committee included domestic violence, which is another symptom of this problem?

A Youth Violence Task Force was established to look at the trends in relation to youth violence, the factors that can lead to Young persons violence

- Drugs and Alcohol
- Anger Management
- Family influences
- Peer influences

Where have these task forces gone, what have they found, when will their proposals be taken on board and funded? (One Punch Can Kill campaign still with the minister following a report back in February) (funding cut then extended for 6 months.... What then?

2. Alcohol (we should not discount the impact of drugs and violence)

Alcohol and Drugs in our society is our fault and it must be. As a society or community we need to take responsibility for the how we promote or tolerate behavioural issues associated with alcohol/drugs. Excessive consumption of alcohol is seen as a right of passage for many young people, it is customary to celebrate any sporting activity with consumption of alcohol by sportsmen and women, often to excess. Yet somehow we accept it as normal behaviour. Alcohol in many ways is like tobacco, acceptable. Perhaps there is a strategy in adopting some of the same principles used to address the tobacco issue. The issue of secondary supply is problematic and will be difficult to prosecute, from what I am led to believe. Parents being buddies rather than parents is a common theme, buying alcohol and or allowing the consumption of alcohol may well be the biggest single contributor to the problem.

3. What have we done so far

What factors have we confronted and addressed, from the 16 recommendations of the Youth Violence task force, which can be distilled into about five (5) of which the Govt. has done two (2).

- Marketing, awareness, advertising and education. Which were items 2,4,5,6,8,9,10, in the recommendations
- Legislation addressing secondary supply of alcohol.

Neither of which is showing any evidence of success. Most of the campaigns commenced are under pressure from reduced funding or being discontinued.

Other regulatory and allegedly proactive steps have been undertaken

- Prohibit the consumption of alcohol in public places
- Lock ins/outs in night clubs
- Plastic glasses introduced for (41 clubs)
- Alco-pop tax (federal Govt.)

We as a community spend tens of thousands of dollars in attempted preventative measures every week with no effect. We can argue the toss all day as to whether we are making inroads or not, but that doesn't change the fact that it is escalating and the above strategies were and remain knee-jerk headlines, not a strategy for success.

4. Have we considered

The trend is growing according to all anecdotal evidence and I would suggest that this committee has been established aware of the fact we are having little or no impact on this issue. Information will be essential in addressing this issue, unfortunately as a community we find it all but impossible to get actual figures from Police, so while they may be claiming some level of success we can't be sure. What we can be sure of is that people continue to present themselves to Casualty Wards, Hospitals and Ambulance Stations. Young people continue to be over represented in the number of victims of bashings, then clearly we have not done enough.

As noted earlier we need to look at the heart of the issue, the factors that lead to violence.

- Drugs and Alcohol

- Anger Management

- Family influences

- Peer influences

We also need to look at the two primary sources of alcohol fuelled violence, Night Clubs and Private Parties.

Private Parties.

Private parties/functions are the primary source of incidents, from bashings, assaults, murders, vandalism, etc. complaints from neighbours about parties that get out of hand. Police are always incredibly out numbered and a target for abuse, often victims of crime. Why don't we protect our Police and resource them appropriately in such circumstances?

With 75% of all alcohol consumed away from a licensed premise is it any wonder there is a growing problem in the suburbs. (stat provided by AHA).

Party Safe as an initiative has merit but until the registers are complete Police have no idea what they could be faced with night after night. Police can only provide protection for the community when they know what is happening, when and where... As a suggestion put to me as a question, why don't we insist all parties be registered? If all parties were registered, Police could advise the hosts of their obligations, such as responsible service of alcohol, under aged drinking, risks and liabilities incumbent on hosts in relation to insurance and lawsuits. It also adds for the first time an opportunity to be proactive, Police could visit parties early in the evening to look around, say hello etc.

A community needs to feel safe, they need to know when Police are called they need to respond in an appropriate and timely manor. Another question put to me is why don't Police have a tactical response team specialised in crowd/party control. It could function like many

other specialist units activated when needed, for parties on week ends, full moons, major events, etc. They also need to have special protection, 'Special Protection' for Police, mandatory offence and mandatory sentence for anyone who assaults an officer. They need to know that we as a society appreciate the garbage they put with and clean up on our behalf. So while we can't stand shoulder to shoulder in the front line, we can cover their backs by protecting them.

Residents and industry have also raised with me the need for personal responsibility, what is the committees thinking on this issue?

Night Clubs

The sentiment by residents about personal responsibility has continued in consultation with venue owners. Issues raised by industry are both complimentary and condemning, many that talked to said they would not be involved in this process for various reasons, one I would mention is that the system appears to punish operators for being proactive (their words not mine). As an example the new 'Plastic Glass' policy and how that determination was made, who was named...

In some cases the clubs/venues are habitual hot spots and should expect to be named. One venue is a privately owned venue, there was an incident where a person entered the venue from across the street picked up a glass or bottle and attacked patron... The offender was not a customer, had some personal motivation to attack some one and this club/Venue has lost reputation for no valid reason...

Others stated that they made their way on to the list because they acted responsibly (they called Police) to prevent incidents, they also commented that in many cases they would sooner evict trouble makers than call Police because again if they act responsibly they almost always get a visit from licensing... I can see both sides of the argument, but I believe partnerships with Police rather than a boots and all licensing raids. (coincidentally I have been at a venue when licensing swooped, I tend to give credence to the venues version of events).....

Industry made some interesting observations.

They want to work with Police but feel penalised by doing so.

They want to have a viable, respectable business that promotes good behaviour and not head lines.

Issues seem to stem from historically venues in a lower socioeconomic demographic or a budget priced/budget entry venue.

3am and 5am lock in/out strategy has not achieved any positive results, it has in many cases escalated negative impacts on community. Some examples given to me are, friends (support networks) can become separated, purses/hand bags left inside venues, there are no toilets on the streets leading to urination in public, etc.

Price points have a role to play, the alco-pop tax has seen an increase in drug appeal, apparently it is cheaper to get drugs than buy a drink. (drugs have a far more devastating impact on everyone than alcohol)

The new license fees are the main reason venues are applying for extensions to opening hours, fees are set with three tiers. Up to Midnight, Midnight to 3am and 3am to 5am. It does not reflect size of the venue, the use or any other logical strategy. A suggestion by the industry I talked with was set your fees on turn-over. It is equitable and targets each venue on its merit/impact.

ID scanners have proven their value in managing offenders. It was suggested that a state wide roll out of scanners managed by QPS not Liquor Licensing will have long term benefits such as the ability to bar someone from every venue in Queensland, it can help with capture of other outstanding issues. It could start to pick up on possible drug dealers moving through a precinct.... This suggestion was supported but with riders in some cases, it might be something only relevant for a venue trading beyond midnight or only night clubs, etc. Offer incentives for the roll out scanners, target the 40+ venues for scanners.... All valid proactive suggestions that came from the industry, I will look forward to your feed back.

It has become obvious that there is no silver bullet, I hope some of the suggestions by my community and the industry are part of a new direction and a safer community.

Regards

Peter Dowling MP
Member for Redlands