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From: Carlos Hurworth [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 30 October 2009 10:59 PM
To: Law, Justice and Safety Committee
Subject: the totalitarian, suffocating 2am closing time debate

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Law, Justice and Safety
Committee

To whom it may concern :

The following comment will preface what i speak of in this letter, although the subject line will have made it very clear :

In response to your article "Police want pubs to close earlier to combat violence" (Courier Mail, October 27)

First and foremost: many people who frequent the venues you are proposing to close at 2am are there to socialise. Alcohol is a lubricant to this social interaction, and applying ludicrous limits to its consumption will cause patrons to consume alcohol at a faster rate, with the earlier closing time in mind. The subsequent results need no mentioning.

Secondly: ALL research into successful alcohol and drug policy correlates with education and treatment increases, and decreases in mandatory restrictions and sentences. Citing examples of European cities and their early closing hours is a weak example - the cost of alcohol related vandalism and violence in the UK, per year - where binge drinking amongst youth is ridiculously rife - is in the billions of pounds to the taxpayer and government! Having worked in the UK, i have seen first hand how glaringly irresponsible vendors are, and with no fear of reprimand. Insisting that license holders and owners inherit these costs by forcing them to lose business, rather than committing government money and resources to this problem is a vote-buying campaign, and a blatantly deceitful buck-passing maneuver, that ignores the fact that politicians should be campaigning to enforce increased proper education of responsible service, and recognition of problematic behaviour within venues for service and security staff. Suffocating the entertainment industry in Brisbane will slowly cause the deaths of many businesses, cause unemployment (leading to further problems, and perhaps crime) and relegate our nightlife to something that we can no longer be proud of.

Police governing my hometown in Brisbane, Australia are attempting to impose a ban on venues staying open later than 2am, in order to quell a problem with violence that they are saying law enforcement bodies and the government themselves are struggling to cope with. While the middle class - detached and distant from the scene that they are despising - are singing the praises of a police force that is "finally listening", obviously there is outcry amongst those who see a different despair for a city that has long lived in the minnows of the capitals of southern states - and undeservedly so.


Furthermore, this act is yet another example of a police force attempting to create the impression that they are acting on behalf of its people, by applying a metaphoric, poor quality band-aid, to a gaping wound, in order to stem the flow of blood from a potentially crippling injury. As i mentioned in my response to the column in The Courier Mail insisting that the venues "responsible" for the violence incur the costs (by forfeiting business with the shorter operating hours) is a weak and transparent attempt by the government to pass the buck, find scapegoats and assure voters that they are combating the problem.

I wonder how many of these voters they are trying to win favour with have actually had direct experience with one of these alcohol fuelled violent outbursts the police are alluding to? And how many of them are standing by, nodding their heads in self-righteous agreement with these policies? I trust they will be thinking little of the consequences of disgruntled revellers pouring streetwards at 2am, wondering where to go. Or of the license holders, venue owners, security staff, alcohol sales reps, wine makers, wine growers, cab drivers, promotional teams,

employers, employees, dj's, entertainers, cleaners and others who may be at a loss to cope with the effective pay cut that they will all be enduring. And the downward spiral continues... When will this government beauracracy realise that these kind of solutions lack the foresight to get a job done, and done well, with finality? For years the American government has imposed incredibly though laws and mandatory minimum sentencing on drug and alcohol offenders, that has not only seen their drug problem escalate in many states, but has caused their prisons to be astonishingly over-filled, at an even greater cost to the government and taxpayers. In the UK - where closing times of almost all venues are notoriously early - alcohol related problems are amongst the worst in the world: the NHS provides figures of 20 year old binge drinkers numbering at 40% for males, for example - compared to figures as low as 9% for the rest of Europe; vandalism and other crime related to alcohol abuse, according to the UK government, costs them £20 billion per year, £1.7 billion of which is subsidized by the taxpayer. Education for those selling and/or dispensing alcohol is virtually non-existent (I know this first hand from having worked in the industry there) whilst recognition amongst staff of over-intoxicated customers is extremely rare. - What does this say of their country's need (and Australia's!) to curb their problems?

Real commitments would involve funding increased training schedules for license holders, owners and managers, as well as strict training for staff in clubs - which includes those behind the bar, as well as security staff stationed inside venues, and at their doors where increasingly, troublesome revellers are being ushered in, by poorly trained, ignorant and unintelligent security staff, without a view to the damage that these affected people could go on to cause. Real commitments would take into account all factors in the equation - including tourism, entertainment and culture, promoting social interaction, supporting and attracting business and enterprise and anticipating the effects that a loss of employment hours will have on a city's young, who one day (with government support or not) hope to go on to be successful - not just the votes of the conservative middle classes. Real commitments would involve precious time and money, which the Queensland Police force and perhaps the government, is effectively saying, they are not willing to commit.

Yours in complete distrust,

Carlos Hurworth


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