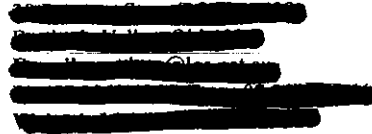


**LIQUOR &
GAMING &
SPECIALISTS**




Our ref: mwj
Your ref:

6 November, 2009

Mr Stephen Finnimore
Manager
Committee Office
&
Research Director
Law, Justice and Safety Committee

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per email: 

Dear Stephen

Inquiry into Alcohol Related Violence

We refer to our previous correspondence regarding this matter, and thank you for your assistance to date.

You will recall that I am the secretary of the Brisbane City Licensees Association (BCLA), as well as the Director of the industry consulting practice Liquor & Gaming Specialists. On behalf of the BCLA we have compiled the submissions reflected in the balance of this letter, and would ask that these be considered by the Inquiry in formulating its recommendations to Government.

Relationship between Valley Liquor Accord and BCLA

BCLA has a broader base than the VLA, with coverage of licensed businesses throughout the Brisbane Metropolitan area. Members include CBD based licensees, but also licensees in West End, Caxton Street, Fortitude Valley and other suburban locations. Accordingly, BCLA is aware, at least in a constructive capacity, of the submissions made by VLA, and supports and adopts those submissions, with perhaps one qualification. This relates to the submission regarding the establishment of detailed management plans for entertainment precincts, which is a matter that has not specifically been the subject of comment by BCLA members, many of whom are not located within definable precincts, and who therefore may not hold the same views.

Methodology

The views expressed below have been gathered and refined through discussions at BCLA meetings, and through debate and consultation among members generally. Additionally, views on specific issues and strategies were gathered via a long form online survey.

Desktop research was undertaken by LGS staff, and a detailed interview with a medical practitioner was arranged to discuss the physiological aspects of liquor consumption.

Long form survey

Set out below are the items put to the survey participants. A representative sample of the results of the survey are included under each item. It will be noted that the items include all matters raised in the discussion paper released by the Inquiry.

The safer venues program (a program which recognises safe venues and gives out awards) should be provided with a large increase in resources in order to take in as many licensed premises as possible, as a way of helping promote and recognise good management practices.

Responses

- Not a bad idea but i doubt this will influence the behaviour of patrons. It may have a positive effect on trade though depending on how this was publicised.
- Agree, and the safer venues programme was a positive exercise. We ended up winning an award for one venue, and we certainly took away some good risk management ideas from the exercise which we are still utilising and improving on today. However, the exercise needs to be also recognised by the Government stakeholders as being beneficial in improving patron safety and risk management standards at venues (which it does do).
- I would be concerned about the Auditors and the Criteria.
- I don't believe that this will resolve any of the underlying issues of safety, it only serves as a distraction of resources from the source of the problem and an attempt to provide a short-term media solution to a more serious problem ...that being, a growing trend of patrons exercising an underlying disrespect for Police/Security and just as dangerously - other patrons.
- Yes - in 14 years operating Calypso Espresso Bar & Cafe, we have never had a case of violence, however, we are forced by current legislation to pay for security officers to open after midnight. Adding the cost of security and the new Government fees for after midnight service, we are losing up to \$1000 a week on previous gross income. Our good management practices should allow a form of rebate on Licence Fees, at least.
- Yes I would definitely support this. Safe venues should be recognised
- The Safer Venues program does offer valuable evaluation and feedback, but participation should be compulsory and the awards recognised for it to become a valuable program.

We need to increase Police presence in public spaces around entertainment precincts. Visible Police presence is arguably the most effective deterrent to misbehaviours of all kinds, including in particular violent behaviour.

Responses

- Disagree, seems to be a lack of respect for police these days.
- Agree with this however, unless police are prepared to take action against offenders then merely having them around will do nothing other than move the problems to another area.
- Any increase in police numbers and presence will be positive and effective. I am pleased with the communication and relationship we have with the Valley police for our venues, and this communication and relationship is further enhanced at the VLA level through the monthly meetings.
- The Police to Patron Ratio would appear to be in the region of 1:1500 in hotspots like the Valley, while security on-premise is at worst 1:250. Most violence resulting in death has been on the streets. I don't believe that large bands of Police are effective and suggest more closely spaced pairs of Police would provide not only a deterrent, but more importantly a helping hand to those in distress or suffering duress.
- yes (this is one of the most important things)
- Agreed. Provide not only a Police presence but a formal edict to Police Officers to proactively apprehend and charge members of the public who engage in socially inappropriate or unlawful activity.
- Absolutely yes - a foot patrol on Friday and Saturday nights would be most welcome in Caxton Street, until the bigger Hotel venues close at 5 am. Plus on the nights when Suncorp Stadium attracts big crowds, the Government has an obligation to manage those crowds en route to buses and trains via Caxton Street. Currently, as soon as the traffic resumes the police leave the area.
- They should continue to patrol until up to 3am when the lingering crowds have dispersed
- In favour of this. As I come from the security industry, it is always nice to have more of a police presence, it definitely does deter misbehaviour
- Strongly agree. The Valley police do an excellent job with the numbers that they have and make themselves very visible on the streets but we could always use more police presence.
- Also promote Police walking through venue's - visibility in Venues also important and reminder to patrons of responsibilities prior to leaving.

Thinking about the use of glass in licensed premises, and the proposed ban, discussion has centred around the ineffectiveness of such a ban, and the negative message which could be sent to patrons through the use of plastics and polycarbonate products in some venues. A blanket policy banning glass should not be introduced.

Responses

- Evidence is mounting that removing glass will not remove violent incidents
- Agree totally. What sort of message does it send that in Queensland you are not allowed to drink out of glass in a hotel or restaurant. Banning glass is a kneejerk reaction not a solution to a problem.
- Agree that a blanket glass ban should not be introduced. What message are we sending to society when we are taking away glasses because of a fear that they can be used as a weapon. Are we saying that society cannot be responsible enough in public so that they are allowed to use a glass in a licensed venue. The problem to focus on is violence, reducing violent incidents, and the behaviour management of people coming into the Valley Entertainment precinct (and more broadly public spaces where there is licensed venues). I don't believe the facts and instances support such a radical change. Patrons in our venues are not actively being violent with an intention to use a glass as a weapon. Incidents are limited and are diffused by security before they are out of hand. The media is creating a fear that venues are violent and unruly, which could not be further from the truth for the majority of venues in the Valley Entertainment Precinct. The compliance, regulation and security within venues actually makes them safe places for people to go out to. One policy change that does create an unsafe environment is the 3am lock out, as this puts people onto the streets in an uncontrolled environment if they leave a venue. This is where the majority of violent incidents occur. The 3am lockout has not been effective in managing violence or excessive drinking. What it has done is create a further unsafe and uncontrolled environment on the streets between 3am and 5am when most people are dispersing from the Valley area. I would like to put forward to Government through the VLA more effective changes that would meet Government and Venues owners needs more appropriately. Given 3am lockout has not worked, why not consider an alternative proposal of scrapping lockout, but banning the supply of alcohol from 4am. Therefore only soft drink and water can be supplied between 4am to 5am.
- Agreed. The venues that have the highest risk should be required to use plastics and polycarbonate products. Venues that are designed as a relaxing and calm environment should be recognized for their lack of contribution to the problem and should not be included in these requirements.
- We have never had an incident with broken glass. A blanket ban is a definite over-reaction.
- I disagree, I am in favour of a total glass ban
- Strongly agree that a blanket ban should not be introduced.

- It should be all hotels banned or no hotels banned

There has been criticism of the widespread use of the term "glassing" as it is now being picked up in the vernacular of young people, leading to a greater likelihood of such an incident occurring. There should be a media ban on the use of the term, in the same way as the media do not report things like suicide, and the amounts of money stolen in robberies.

Responses

- I don't think banning the media from reporting the amount of money stolen deters many criminals or stops people committing suicide. Banning the use of the term will have little or no effect.
- Good idea, but how can this be achieved. The term glassing and its use by media and Government has certainly got to propaganda stage at present, and the media has successfully painted a picture of violence, and an unsafe and an unruly environment in late night trade venues and precincts (which is not actually the case)
- Sorry but this seems a ridiculous idea to me
- This would be a positive outcome for the industry in such that it would allow some time for specific initiatives to gain traction that will actually reduce the focal point that seems to have been created by the popular media.
- Banning media terminology will not happen. But "wounding" with splintered or cracked hard plastic can be just as dangerous. Hopefully the term "plasticking" or "he was plasticked in the neck" will not be adopted by police, government officials, or media.
- Completely agree
- Strongly agree.
- The use of glass in an attack is one of convenience whether it is a glass or a bottle. Venue's should be more vigilant in clearing their floors. I have not had a glassing incident since starting at Irish Murphy's High visibility security and a strong team of Glassies ensure my patron Safety. It is easy to cut wage costs by reducing the amount of Glassies and security on a Venue Floor, this puts patrons at risk.

Price-based advertising of takeaway liquor should be banned, in the same way as prohibitions currently apply to advertising the price of liquor which is consumed on-premises. This will contribute to a reduction in "loss leader" pricing practices which feature prominently in this market segment. Some research has identified price as the major incentive/disincentive to drinking behaviours, and as such the advertising ban proposed would be one way of affecting pricing.

Responses

- I agree it is totally unfair to only target on premise business with the price based bans
- Why not introduce some sort of limit on the amount of alcohol people can buy at any one time. If you can only buy a certain amount of drinks per person in a hotel then why not impose a similar limit in a retail situation. This could be tiered based on a customers age.
- Agree, and the message to society needs to be clear that binge drinking in youth emanates from cheap alcohol from discount liquor stores, not from licensed venues.
- If it is correct that 80% of alcohol is consumed outside Licenced Premises then it is reasonable to conclude that the significant price disparity is a reason that very large percentages of people drink before going to a Licensed venue, some to the point of being inadmissible to a Lic venue.
- Take-away sales should face the same restrictions.
- Absolutely agree. This is one of the most significant problems that lies within the liquor industry in Qld. The inequity of advertising laws provides an infinite supply of low cost-high alcohol product to patrons who are consuming product in unregulated environments (ie. their homes) whilst having little understanding or knowledge of responsible consumption.
- Yes that is reasonable.
- I agree if it is banned for licensed premises, the same ban should be imposed on bottle shops
- I agree most younger patrons are drinking more before the come out because it is cheaper to buy takeaway.
- Cannot comment on this as unsure of the impact nor the research conducted.

The underlying problem is not liquor, but a predisposition to engage in violent behaviour. In other words, we have a violence problem, not a liquor problem, and strategies which focus solely on liquor control measures are therefore unlikely to have any effect.

Responses

- We most certainly have a violence problem and the cause is not alcohol. You only need to look at the prevalence of schoolkids videoing themselves attacking each other. At no time is alcohol mentioned as a cause of these incidents. One of the major issues is the lack of any form of punishment handed out to offenders. Until they are made to pay a heavy price for their actions there is no disincentive to alter their behaviour.
- Agree that we have a violence problem not a liquor problem. Many an individual has commented that the youth of today appears to sort out differences in a lot more violent manner than previous generations. The focus should be on behaviour management and educating youth on how to behave in public, when drinking alcohol etc. I believe the licensed venues with security already do this to a great extent and it needs to be backed up more by government. The 'one punch can kill' is an example of how behaviour management media can be effective.
- Ultra violence appears to be a Gen Y phenomenon which overlaps the rise of professional football in Australia, X Box, U-Tube, and mobile phones. The rapid increase in Female violence and cyber bullying is part of the ailment. Countless Generations before have not behaved in this fashion.
- Agree. This is more a social problem of which alcohol is simply the vice used to address the ills our society is feeling as a whole. The alcohol obviously exacerbates the deep seeded feelings and with inhibitions relaxed, stronger actions occur, whether they be violence, depression, sexual or otherwise. And the combination of drugs with alcohol is probably the worst part of the problem as behaviours are only further exaggerated. Police presence, drug testing, alcohol testing is more effective in curbing the bad behaviour than just focussing on the alcohol. Make people accountable for their actions...police presence is much more productive.
- This is true, although it is not a defensible argument to try and convince the wider public and/or media that liquor is not partly responsible. The problem of violence is undeniably systemic in today's society from a much broader sense than purely within the confines of pubs/clubs/nightclubs etc. Regardless, the ugly combination of liquor and violence could be significantly mitigated by introducing greater equity in the sale and advertising of liquor across on-premise and off-premise establishments. This would discourage, or reduce the incidence of, rapid consumption in a private scenario whereby those involved are not being monitored by trained professionals as they would be in a bar/pub environment.
- Yes we believe that is the case.

- Once again I agree, there is obviously a societal problem with violence and more measures should be taken to treat the real problem, not alcohol
- Strongly agree
- I think that there an authority issue as well
- Violence is an issue, but exacerbated if liquor is involved. Education is the key, earlier awareness and prevention.

ID Scanners - there are mixed views about the appropriateness of scanners. However, the consensus appears to be that their use, as well as the use of other technology and strategies needs to be incentivised, meaning that there should be some obvious and marketable incentive for venues to adopt the new strategies. This could be, for example, in the form of reduced licence fees, or increased trading privileges.

Responses

- I don't like ID scanners for our business.
- We use them and they form part of our overall alcohol management strategy. I would however like to see the police or state government come out and say publicly they support their use and that this is not a privacy or civil liberty issue as that is the most common complaint we receive.
- ID scanners are not required nor appropriate for all venues. ID scanners are beneficial as a risk management tool for patrons entering where a risk exists. For venues that have the potential to be higher risk in terms of patron mis-behaviour, then ID scanners being implemented is appropriate and in some instances necessary. However, for venues that are lower risk, and the potential or instances of patron mis-behaviour is low and/or negligible, then ID scanners are not required.
- Cost is not a disincentive to us. We simply believe that most people resent being micro managed this way and resent Big Brothers continual invasion into their lives. We also have the view that if a venue operates without violence then a benefit is hard to see.
- Fine, but only require for appropriate venues where large masses of people and drugs/alcohol are prevalent. This is definitely not appropriate for well managed discreet venues and is a true violation of privacy.
- It seems obvious to encourage the use of approved technology by providing reduced license fees for those who are actively seeking to provide best practice in their venues. ID scanners are the first step in the process.

- Completely agree. They are obviously fantastic in helping venues but because they are so expensive there should be some incentive for venues to use them.

Do you have any other comments?

Responses

- Again there seems to be nothing mentioned about the obvious drug problem in and around licensed venues and the violence related issues this causes. To sit in a meeting and hear the police say there is no link between drug taking and violence is alarming at the least. Until the authorities stop burying their head in the sand over this matter, the violence will continue and licensees will be taking all of the blame.
- The largest problem is offenders who get caught are being dealt with far to lightly by the judicial system, frankly I think this is the largest cause of the problem we face today.
- Take the focus away from being a blanket answer to a more social and specific venue problem. Make the venues who are responsible for encouraging this type of out of control party behavior pay for the problems they are causing, not the rest of us trying to run well managed, responsible, safe and comfortable venues.

Why do some individuals become violent offenders after consuming alcohol? What medical or psychological factors are involved?

Responses

- I am of the opinion that an 18 year old cutting off a 25 year old is a recipe for conflict and should not be encouraged as it is now, viz RSA.
- Poor parental upbringing and discipline. Lack of accountability for their actions combined with violent/abusive/absent parenting.
- Some offenders have no concept of taking responsibility for their own actions. There has been a total loss of respect and action / consequence among the younger generation.
- Individuals upbringing and previous exposure to violence and alcohol.

What measures are there to reduce harm?

Responses

- Water, Cutting them off, Lock outs

- Over the last half doz. years, a raft of compliance and regulations have been introduced.
- Police presence and more harsh consequences for violent behavior. Accountability and education.
- Through staff training, venue policies, security and police presence, inner city venue's do our best to reduce harm but at some stage patrons need to also be responsible for their own behaviour. Measures that have been implemented include the lockout, RSA, Security, licenced managers, alcohol advertising ban.
- Education needs to be introduced commercially and to schools

How effective have those measures been?
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Responses

- Lock outs not very,
- Startlingly unsuccessful if current outcomes are any guideline.
- I guess it has not been enough to reduce the problem
- These measures have been effective in educating the staff and management of licenced venues, and developed more responsible drinking practices in venues but has not helped the incidence of violence in the community and outside licenced venues.
- Drink Driving (reduction) is an example - media and education has lifted the profile of this initiative

What works? What doesn't work?

Responses

- Making people responsible for their actions and enforcing tough penalties against people who do the wrong thing.
- Media and management of behaviour standards does work, this is where we need to target.
- RSA is dangerous. It creates conflict between patrons and staff by empowering young people with no lifeskills to police intoxication. This is a Management function!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
- Trying to regulate alcohol service with a blanket approach is clearly not the solution. The problem exists in higher ratios in certain venues, those venues need to be accountable for the culture they nurture

- Education of venue staff and patrons works and measures such as the lock-out and proposed plastic glasses does not work. Harsher penalties for violent behaviour would start as a very strong deterrent against assault.
- Impact ads - current TV and print is effective and profound.

How have late opening hours impacted on the incidence of alcohol-related violence?

Responses

- Increased.
- I believe the lockout contributes to violence, as people are locked out of venues in uncontrolled environments.
- Trading hours do not necessarily contribute to violence.
- I believe the lock outs are probably more harm than good because you just upset a drunk patron and then they take out their anger on innocent people. RSA is more of the solution and holding venues accountable for practicing good management.
- We have not found that there is any greater violence in our venues, but it does seem more prevalent on the streets because more people are pushed onto the streets where they are unsupervised by security and there is not enough police supervision at that time of night.

What has been the impact of the 3am lockout on the incidence of alcohol-related violence?

Responses

- Increased violence
- The 3am lockout has contributed to violence as stated above. Inside venues there is a controlled environment with security, management, compliance and standards. If patrons leave after 3am, they are in an uncontrolled environment without these measures to keep their behaviour in check.
- Friction.
- Increased the aggression on the streets as there is not enough police around at that time to cater to the numbers of people that can not enter venues and loiter around the streets.

What other impacts has the 3am lockout had on patrons, venues, and other stakeholders?

Responses

- Reduced profits, increased security, ore violence reported
- Water should find its own level. The lockout and the loss of some venues' 5am Lic had people moving into different territory. Disastrous!
- I am sure there are positive impacts, but I am not aware of what they are.

What changes, if any, should be made to opening hours, and alcohol service strategies within those hours, to reduce alcohol-related violence?

Responses

- A change that should be strongly considered is scrapping the 3am lockout, and introducing no alcohol being served in late night venues after 4am. This can ensure patrons will tend to stay in controlled environments or go home, but with no alcohol being served between 4am to 5am, just water and soft drink.
- Our view is that all venues should close at or by 3am, phased in over a year, ie., 4am from 1 Jan '10 and 3am from 1 Jan '11.
- More stringent RSA and testing in key venues
- Harsher penalties for venues that do not follow the legislation and also for patrons that do not drink and behave appropriately or responsibly.

What is the impact of alcohol-related violence on police and other emergency service workers and health workers?

Responses

- It's a strain on resources.
- Why has this Government chosen to exclude illicit and prescription drugs as a causative factor in the types of violence being investigated? What research is available about the effects of caffeine and energy drinks mixed with alcohol? Or alcohol and cocaine or amphetamines?
- High impact and cost but we need to change this young culture of binge drinking, drugs and then subsequent violence. Harsher consequences are required in key problem areas.

- I can imagine that it is extremely trying and also disheartening on police when they do press charges and the court system lets offenders off.
- It would be detrimental.

How can negative impacts on these workers be reduced?

Responses

- Give them more power to make offenders responsible instead of not having any consequences on offenders
- Get rid of the problem drinkers/bingers
- Harsher penalties for offenders, particularly for offences against workers.
- Reduce the violence and lift the education of the impacts of alcohol and violence.

How do we change the drinking culture and create a culture of individual responsibility?

Responses

- It is a generational thing.
-
- Media education campaigns, and school campaigns as students leave Grade 12. I think we need to advise students at 17 how they should act and behave with alcohol in society when they turn 18.
- The vast majority of people never turn to violence regardless how much they have drunk which suggests the root of the problem lies elsewhere.
- Stronger police presence and consequences until the culture changes. There is a good culture of not drink driving in this country, so it is possible. But it is a culture because the consequences are in your face (drink driving roadside testing at all hours/days) and good public advertising.
- The other most significant issue within the liquor industry (in concert with inequitable advertising regulations) is the lack of individual responsibility accepted by patrons. The negative elements of Australia's drinking culture could be drastically improved by a systematic education process over the next decade targeted to parents of young teens. In conjunction with this, it is necessary to set clear social boundaries whereby prosecution, serious fines and even jail is the outcome for repeat offenders. Such a process would require a National intergrated approach by Police, Government, the Justice system and the Liquor industry (including all links in the supply chain).

- Harsher penalties for poor or aggressive behaviour.
- Individual responsibility.

What education campaigns are currently in place?

Responses

- Drinkwise have plenty
-
- The no drinks to teens is not very powerful. They need to promote the consequences not the decision to give kids alcohol, but WHY NOT give it to them.
- TV & print - continue and increase

How effective have they been?

Responses

- Variable but will be years possibly before their effect is felt.
- Partially

How could they be improved?

Responses

- Continue - lift frequency thereof.

How are parents influencing the attitudes of young Queenslanders?

Responses

- Parents could always do more, and I think the current media ads are beneficial in parents realising their actions may be causing harm in terms of future behaviour.
- Poor parenting and lack of discipline is probably more the problem than the alcohol itself. where are the family values and self respect these days taught? Parents need to be more responsible for their offspring.

- Parents need to teach young children respect and discipline and not leave it up to the police and venue security to manage their problems. Kids in the generation coming through need to respect alcohol and learn that it is a social privilege and not a right.

How can parents be assisted in instilling responsible attitudes to drinking?

Responses

- Stop buying underage kids alcohol
- The focus should be on violence. Generation Y is more violent and callous than any before it.
- By example and coaching, talking to their kids, listening to their kids issues and helping them solve it without the vice of alcohol.
- When children are punished with harsher fines, loss of licences, and jail time, parents will begin look out for their children more and warn them about the dangers.
- Lead by example

What is the economic cost of alcohol-related violence to the Queensland community?

Responses

- Large
- Too high
- Massive

How could this cost be reduced?

Responses

- Reduced advertising for off premise specials
- Resolve the social issue
- Lift awareness of it

“Alcohol-related” violence

BCLA challenges the notion that there is any clear distinction between violence generally, and violence which is “alcohol-related”.

Entrenched positions with respect to the relationship between alcohol and violent behaviour are likely to be based on inaccuracy, and upon fear and prejudice. Methods of associating two such complex factors as alcohol consumption and violent or rather, aggressive tendencies are prone to misrepresentation. Violence, falling under the broader definition of aggressive behavior, is complex, influenced by behavioural, social, chemical and physiological factors, which contribute to the perception of a relationship with consumption of alcohol. Findings from the American National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism research into the relationship between Alcohol, Violence and Aggression explored the association between the two factors.

A number of conclusions were established as a result of the study.

The disruption of normal brain activity as a result of alcohol assumption can contribute to aggression and violence. However, this is not a definite link, and although alcohol may induce or facilitate aggressive behaviour, subjects in this study rarely increased their aggression unless they felt threatened or provoked. Additionally, "neither intoxicated nor sober participants administered painful stimuli when nonaggressive means of communication (e.g., a signal lamp) were also available" (Gustafson (1994). Alcohol and aggression).

Studies have also concluded that no simple relationship between alcohol consumption and aggression exists, and that the amount of alcohol consumed by an individual is not the strongest predictor of violence in a licensed venue, once other factors are considered (Cassematis, Mazerolle (2009). Understanding glassing incidents on licensed premises: dimensions, prevention and control).

Ross Homel et al (Homel, Carvolth, Hauritz, McIlwain and Teague (2004). Making licensed venues safer for patrons: what environmental factors should be the focus of interventions) for example, identify some of the relevant factors. "These factors include the serving and consumption of alcohol, physical comfort, the degree of overall 'permissiveness' in the establishment, the availability of public transport, and aspects of 'the ethnic mix' of patrons." (Page 28) They go on to state that "The regression analyses are consistent with our hypothesis that if one concentrated only on the control of drinking, reductions in aggression and violence would not be as great as could be achieved if a more holistic approach were adopted." (Page 28).

Research suggests the relationship between increased alcohol consumption and aggression/violence is complex, depending on the individual circumstances. Episodes of increased consumption compared to normal consumption levels can sometime be associated with increased approval of violence, and hence, consequently higher levels of aggression. In effect, this means that a person is more likely to drink heavily when in an adverse mood, allowing an increased possibility of violence as a result of the mood. The patron's underlying mental state may motivate violent behaviour, but also motivates heavier drinking. More effective than attempting to regulate drinking behaviour therefore are strategies designed to firstly address that mental state, and secondly provide better deterrents for unlawful actions.

Research has also established that alcohol consumption may promote aggression purely due an expectation that it will. A research study using both using real and mock alcoholic beverages shows in an appropriate social setting "that people who believe they have consumed alcohol begin to act more aggressively, regardless of which beverage they actually consumed" (Gustafson *ibid*).

Additionally, it is assumed knowledge that in any violent conflict, at least one participant makes a structured decision to become involved. Decisions such as this involve the rational evaluation of a possibility of 'winning' the conflict. This decision making process exists with and without the presence of alcohol, suggesting that alcohol does not prevent logical decision making and rational judgements. In other words, it has been established that such decision making processes are independent of alcohol consumption (Cassebatis and Mazerolle at page 16).

Whilst it is established that alcohol works to remove an individual's inhibition, whether it be sexual, aggressive or otherwise, much research also suggests a definite link between defects in cognitive functioning and other related psychopathic traits with increased aggression in venues like bars and clubs. Individuals with personality traits such as impulsive aggression will be predisposed to interpreting almost any action as overly aggressive and respond as such, even when no such intent exists (Cassebatis and Mazerolle at page 111).

Moreover, the dis-inhibiting effect of alcohol is likely to be experienced a relatively low levels of liquor consumption. Soldiers going into battle were in the past given small volumes of liquor (one or two shots of rum for example) as a way of shoring up their courage. Discussions with medical practitioners confirmed this as a physiological phenomenon, to the extent that the less inhibited behaviour is likely to occur before intoxication levels reach a point of an inability to legally drive, and certainly well below what licensees would regard as the point of "undue intoxication" at which liquor service should be refused.

The facilitative rather than causative effect of liquor consumption on aggressive behaviour is supported by empirical data. Miczek's experiments with squirrel monkeys found that alcohol administration had no effect on the levels of aggression among subordinate animals, but appeared to make socially dominant animals more aggressive. (Miczek, K. A. (1994) *Alcohol, drugs of abuse, aggression, and violence.*)

The State Government's own research (Cassebatis, Mazerolle *ibid*) generally supports the position. Notably, the Key Learnings reported by the authors do not identify liquor consumption as a predictor of violent behaviour (including glassing incidents), and the stated intention of the project was to "identify contextual precursors of glassing assaults". The research identified in the literature review is equivocal, but generally reflects the views of licensees, which in turn are based on extensive experience observing the behaviour of patrons within their own venues. The authors conclude that "existing literature indicates that the relationship between aggression, violence and alcohol consumption is more complicated than a simply positive linear relationship between volume of alcohol consumed and the level of violence or aggression. A number of factors intrinsic to individual patrons, social variables and the physical environment within venues interact to increase or decrease the likelihood of assault." (Page 35). Again, the factors mentioned (a patron's individual characteristics, social variables and physical environment) notably do not include or refer directly to liquor consumption.

That strategies must address the underlying causes of violence, rather than simply focussing yet again on controls within licensed premises is supported by reference to the factors which have lead to the establishment of the Inquiry itself. Despite the extensive reforms which have taken place in and around the management of licensed venues over the last 15 to 20 years, allegations of increased levels of violent behaviour persist. The challenge is therefore to accept that licensed venues and venue management do not require further adjustment or modification, and look elsewhere for ways of achieving more with the tiny proportion of individuals who are prepared to act in a violent, unlawful and societally unacceptable way.

Conclusion

The data and opinions gathered during the course of the preparation of these submissions clearly establish a number of key elements for consideration. In summary, these are:

- **The need for far higher levels of personal responsibility including increased penalties to deter future offences**
- **Concurrent lifting of the focus of Government on further controls over liquor dispensing**
- **Persistent and ongoing education campaigns around improving drinking culture and behaviour**
- **Increased and visible Police presence**
- **Evidence rather than impulse based decision making (for example banning glass)**
- **Removal of the lock out**
- **Introduction of prohibitions on price-based advertising for off premises liquor sales**

Please contact the writer if you require any further information or explanation.

Yours faithfully



Matthew Jones
Director