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Submission to the Queensland Parliamentary Inquiry into Alcohol Related Violence

1.0 Introduction

It is amply apparent that a serious antisocial problem exists within Queensland Society if not throughout Australian communities due to excessive and binge drinking alcohol consumption. The fundamental reason for this condition is the work of professional sociologists and psychologists. This report does not have these qualifications nor does it seek to address these professional issues.

It is easy to pick on the more visible elements within community that contribute to this outcome being young adults (18-25) who are at the prime of their life and are more socially orientated, interactive and out and about. It is not the intention of this submission to focus on the underage (16-18) year-old bracket that contribute to Schoolies participation, but rather to try and explain what comes after Schoolies as teenagers embrace developing maturity and increased accountability.

They are probably not doing a lot different to what previous generations of Queenslanders did as they seek to understand the meaning of life, meet partners, generate a network of friends outside educational facilities, enjoy their newfound independence and generally speaking socialize. However, their attitude to alcohol in moderation and its use as a social medium is certainly not considered to be in keeping, generally speaking, with past generations. It can probably be said that there has always been a small percentage of hard core young adults or teenagers that are overwhelmed by alcohol for whatever reason. It is acknowledged that some do not grow out of this impressionable 'era' and become addicts. This submission seeks to provide some answers to the changing circumstances and attitudes of young adults on the Gold Coast exclusively and to review civic attitude, decisions and outcomes that may aggravate the antisocial demeanour to the extent of becoming a violent disorder.

2.0 Personal Qualifications

My knowledge, understanding and learning's stem primarily from community roles and community participation achieved from the positions of Chairman of the Broadbeach Police Community Consultative Committee (CCC), member of the Surfers Paradise Police Community Consultative Committee (CCC), President of two resident organizations within the Surfers Paradise and Broadbeach precinct, student of the Gold Coast Planning Scheme and stemming back to my first work experience at the Gold Coast City Council where I studied local government accounts and law. But the most valuable information bank has been the purpose selected position of part time taxi driver for Regent Taxis, now known as Gold Coast Cabs, driving from 5.00pm to 5.00am on Friday, Saturdays and Sundays evenings. As a former candidate at the Local Authority election in 2004 it was my ambition to have a better understanding of the antisocial complaints emanating out of the entertainment precinct at Surfers Paradise.

3.0 Prelude or early warnings over antisocial and unacceptable behaviour

It cannot be denied that antisocial behaviour, excessive and perhaps irresponsible intake of alcohol by young adults leading to violent outcomes was an issue that crept up on our Gold Coast community. In 2002/2003 a passionate community advocate by the name of John Hill (deceased), a resident of downtown Surfers Paradise at the time who was also the Chairman of the Surfers Paradise Community Association, championed the campaign of awareness over these issues. He sought audiences with local GCCC Councillors and State Members of Parliament and Cabinet Ministers. The then sitting Member for Surfers Paradise, Mr. Lex Bell, tabled a question on notice in Parliament on the 16.5.2002 to then Police Minister

McGrady over concerns of Mr. Hill relevant to antisocial behaviour, lawlessness, street offences and hooning in Surfers Paradise. The question called for the Police Minister to support a 'study project' with Griffith University into the said problems. A copy of the question and response is now attached. The Member asked a further question in Parliament without notice on the 26.11.02. Former Premier Beattie responded regarding illegal actions by older predators, now known as Toolies. This response is also attached. It is clear that seven years ago the warning bells of things to come were ringing.

A copy of the substantial dossier provided to the former Premier, Mr. Peter Beattie, by Mr. Hill remains in my possession and is available if requested. Mr. Hill, an Australian, had been a resident of Honolulu Hawaii for a number of years prior to retiring to the Gold Coast, but it is not known if he was drawing on experiences or knowledge whilst a resident of that tourist city. However, for the records it must be mentioned that he vividly forecast and foresaw the emerging social problems in Surfers Paradise. Generally speaking he was not taken seriously. He was a critic of Schoolies in the early days when the festival was more 'hit and miss' rather than organized. Once the Queensland Government, through the Department of Sport & Rec (Major Events Section), took control of the event Schoolies became more streamlined and coordinated. However, that success created separate problems due to the rapidly expanding numbers and the obvious popularity of the event with school leavers.

4.0 The social journey

One can only wonder what triggered this widespread attitude of extremism and/or recklessness triggered by intake of drugs/alcohol (binge drinking) that all too often defies moral conduct and lawful code and why it is 'fashionable'. One suggestion is that it was a product of Woodstock, Carnaby Street or the like. We won't go there but will suggest that the 'fad' may have its roots in the 'baby boomer' generation. The non recognition and passive opposition to authority! If so was this condition eventually embraced by the broader community and has it been 'handed down'?

Since the 'baby boomers' we have gone through Generation X to Generation Y - the grandchildren of baby boomers. My direct experience in the taxi industry permits me to make assumptions with today's apparent social delinquency.

One particular experience I embraced in the taxi was with a young male adult (around twenty) who was the last of a 'team' of pals who was being dropped off at a trendy house in a fashionable inner city suburb. All 'pals' were affected by drugs of one sort or another. An altercation developed over the payment of the fare from the remaining and somewhat disgruntled passenger. It brought the young adults mother to the street at 3.00am. I alighted from the cab with the intent of making sure that I collected the fare. The mother was an extremely polite and courteous parent who continually apologised for her son's behaviour. She was clearly embarrassed. She continually and politely asked her son to pay the fare and to go inside. His belligerence was obvious as was his mother's distress and struggle to deal with the situation. The fare was paid and I quickly departed.

The question that remained was how does an obviously caring and doting parent find herself in the predicament of unwanted emotional anguish over her son's delinquent behaviour? How could a negligent son uncaringly display blatant disrespect in front of and for his concerned mother? The answer is certainly substantial alcohol and/or drug abuse and his mindset. The fifteen dollar fare was not the cause of the predicament.

This experience is only one of many that expose the vulnerability of Generation Y culture. There is no dividing line between male and female activity nor is there any apparent judgement from one to the other. They appear willing partners. My own taxi experience identified that a far greater number of females are 'sick' in the cab or alongside the cab than occurs with males.

5.0 Today's social habits of generation Y

Teenagers and young adults are living in a more liberal community with many overt influences over alcohol consumption. Some of these alcohol influences include:

- Parent's who hold a non-interventionist and free-thinking attitude over alcohol.
- Movies and TV that constantly portray alcohol consumption
- Alcohol advertising
- Sporting identities that carry alcohol advertising on their outfits making it 'cool' (this activity is now less noticeable)

- The prevalence on the Gold Coast, at least, to an overwhelming number of bottle shops, retail liquor shops and hotel drive-in facilities creating easy access
- Nightclubs being the principal 'meeting place' for young adults and therefore forming the nucleus of social interaction within community.
- Tourist events that engender careless attitudes spiked by excessive alcohol intake such as the SuperGP, Schoolies and music festivals. For many years the Indy event saw the encouragement and provocation of females to bare their breasts on apartment balconies usually after hours of alcohol consumption. This outrageous behaviour grew to include going naked as well as the advertising of prostitution services from the apartment balconies. The Gold Coast Bulletin revealed this out of control culture on October 24, 2007. (Attached) This alarming situation shows a female baring her bikini bottom and displaying her naked body to the crowd whilst an eight or nine year old youth in the underneath apartment takes in the experience. One has to ask who is more to blame the naked female or the parent with a bottle of beer in his hand permitting his (probably) son to take in the exhibition?

5.1 Travel to and from clubs

The taxi experience confirmed that an overwhelming number of Generation Y young adults go out with the premeditated intent to binge drink and collapse. As they call it to get 'plastered', 'maggotted' or 'destroyed'. But the option to have a nice social evening with a social alcoholic drink is not part of the plan by many. They congregate at one of the 'pals' homes and commence the regime of alcoholic consumption (cheaply) prior to departing for the 'clubs' anywhere between 9.00pm to 12.00 midnight. They then proceed in a group by taxi or maxi taxi to the entertainment precinct. It is common occurrence to want to continue the drinking in the taxi. It appears that the cost of access to the clubs (not usually applied for females) is a burden but what is onerous is the cost of alcoholic drinks at the clubs. This can be the forerunner to taking cheaper option amphetamines for a 'kick' and the then 'mixing' of alcohol and drugs. The taxi experience confirmed the widespread mixing of alcohol and drugs by many Generation Y young adults. It was at times noticeable that this dual activity when 'flagged' was the contributor to a changed, or perhaps I should say, antisocial personality. These changed personalities come with varying degrees of mood.

It is not unusual to have to deny young adults taxi passage as they have spent their last dollar in the clubs becoming immobile. If this 'fare' outcome is not detected at the taxi rank where paid supervisors or the mingling public are in attendance the eventuality exists that this can later on become the source of violence for taxi drivers in a remote location. This brings into play the 'people skills' of those employed as professional taxi drivers. Conduct by some club patrons at taxi ranks, bus stops or those patrons that seek to walk rather than queue are also potential creators of public violence through their alcoholic state. These are civic issues and are the central plank to this submission.

6.0 Categories of Violence

It has been my experience that delinquent antisocial and violent behaviour through alcoholic consumption breaks down into two core categories. Those that are adversely impacted by alcohol and are an immediate potential problem (violent) or the instigator of a problem, and secondly those that are alcohol impacted and are reactive to intimidation, provocation or changing circumstances due to their condition and may become violent or reciprocate with violence. This submission will not deal with the first issue as it is accepted this particular person probably requires professional healthcare attention over attitude and is not my area of expertise. The second issue is different as it brings into play mitigating circumstances, apart from 'one on one' provocation (are you looking at me?!), such as club environment, urban conditions and civic responsibilities.

Although preventative policing plays a huge role in today's Police Force (QP) it is to be remembered that QP are expected to be seen as a deterrent to unlawful behaviour and to uphold lawful process. The in-house role of patron conduct at Clubs has been relegated to private Security Officers. The condition of the club and its patron viability is the task of the QP Liquor Licensing Branch and/or depending on the outcome the Queensland Fire Service.

It is accepted that on the Gold Coast initiatives are afoot that will interconnect clubs by phone to each other and to QP. Electronic surveillance entry methods are wide and varied and should become lawful practise so as to identify the patrons on the licensed premises in the advent of violent antisocial behaviour and the ability to be able to identify and then isolate repeat offenders.

The professionalism of Licensed Premises Security Officers has been a serious problem in the past; the death of a patron at Fisherman's Wharf by Security Officers and beatings in Surfers Paradise and other venues as my personal experience indicates such as the Grand Hotel.

7.0 Factors that are considered to contribute to or enhance the potential for alcoholic violence

These issues will be dealt with individually.

7.1.1 Community Care at a Federal level

This submission believes the Federal, and to a lesser following extent the State Governments, need to be accountable for determining the social demeanour and the consequences for a nation of people who are generally speaking overtly obsessed with alcohol and its regular consumption. This includes:

- the visible influences through the media and movie industry that promote the culture of boozing
- brewery advertising that in the past has advanced alcohol consumption as a way of life
- brewery promotion of alcopops targeted at the vulnerable and impressionable market target

7.1.2 Community Care at a State level

- Major events such as music festivals, tourist events and end of school carnivals that provide liquor services as part of the profitable outcome whilst not necessarily offsetting excessive alcohol consumption with adequate restrictions on abuse control. To effectively police this outcome could impact on the successful bottom line required by management.

This submission encourages the Inquiry to consider that tourist events should develop as a responsible industry to safeguard against devaluing standards that include excessive alcohol consumption. The successful management of these events can be the measure, or contribute to, the personal values that determine the character of the impressionable and younger residents of our City and State. It is considered that the Queensland Government (QG) through their Department of Sport & Rec and Major Projects has been found willing to accept unsatisfactory standards within the tourist industry. This is, let's say, compared to the Victorian Government (VG) that package their events with increased sophistication and personal values. An example could be the \$12 million plus that the QG allocate to bringing a somewhat debauched event such as the SuperGP motor race event (see attachments) to the Gold Coast as compared to the VG who spent \$3 million (in fact \$1.3 million) to bring Mr. Tiger Woods to Melbourne. The VG could expect 10 fold the international publicity and exposure that the QG might receive for the SuperGP. But the social division caused by the SuperGP is alarming whilst the social impact is regularly quantified in the Letters to the Editor section of the Gold Coast Bulletin (GCB).

This is not political criticism of the Queensland Government or in particular censure of the Premier of Queensland as the headline story in the GCB on the 24th October 2007 displayed the obvious concern and reaction of Premier Bligh to the debauchery linked to the Indy (SuperGP) event and arrests by QP for alcohol related matters as also illustrated in the GCB of the day. (Attached)

The standards brought to Australian Football on the playing field and in the spectator stands by Victorian Management is a further example of responsible packaging of a major event that makes the event the spectacle not the excessive consumption of alcohol as has happened at other sporting events.

The Schoolies event has clearly created the wrong message for impressionable teenagers and young Australians over responsible management of alcohol consumption.

But the question has to be asked, "What are these impressionable events, if not properly managed, doing to the mindset and outlook of Australian teenagers where excessive alcohol consumption or binge drinking is part of the occurrence." This submission does not seek to suggest that it is all participants who embrace this culture or that those who participate in excessive consumption are likely to continue the 'fad' and become addicted to alcohol abuse for the rest of their times. But what it does seek to question is if these alcohol-based events create social conditioning that is capable of impacting on a percentage of young Australians as a culture or the progression and possible expansion of an existing culture.

This submission accepts that before there can be alcohol induced violence there has to be a regime of drinking alcohol.

The SuperGP on the Gold Coast is derided by the broader business community who claim it financially benefits only accommodation houses and clubs and liquor outlets. So, is Queensland in an endeavour to progress tourism being innovative or is it creating a culture of social anguish? A culture on the Gold Coast that places too much importance on alcohol consumption as the reason for being, rather than alcohol being a social addition to an enjoyable social diversion or pastime. Is the Gold Coast typical of other Queensland cities? What engenders a way of life where violence including the prevalent and highly dangerous outcome of glassings happens all too often by young Australians on young Australians. (Attached – ‘Cops, not courts, pick up pieces of grog carnage’ GCB 12.11.09)

This submission does accuse the Queensland Government of acting inappropriately by choosing to vary the liquor licensing of dining establishments by permitting them after the close of dining business to operate as a bar. This action certainly makes the service provision of alcohol much more readily available for longer periods of time at many more establishments.

7.1.3 Community Care at a local level

This submission acknowledges the importance and greater significance attached to local authorities as the government body closest to the ground in implementing infrastructure requirements to alleviate ‘contributing affects’ or ‘harm minimisation’ to prospective alcoholic violence through civic causes.

Whereas the number of retail liquor outlets around Surfers Paradise, in particular, which some say makes a detrimental visual impact statement, should not be viewed as necessarily increasing alcohol consumption as this is already a competitive and well serviced market. This statement recognizes the ‘across the road’ as opposed to ‘down the road’ service facilitation.

This submission is critical of the Gold Coast City Council who it considers to be a biased authority and one who openly supports the free market economy modus operandi. They are not considered to have a balanced approach between the public and private interests who regularly favour commercial outcomes to the detriment of the public, particularly issues surrounding public safety. The GCCC is regarded as having failed to take reasonable steps to combat ‘contributing affects’ or ‘harm minimisation’ steps within community.

Three examples of this attitude by the GCCC include:

- Hilton Hotel development at Orchard Avenue, Surfers Paradise
- Soul development on the Esplanade at Surfers Paradise
- SuperGP at Macintosh Island Park
- Private Development Approvals by the GCCC that do not reflect ‘smart’ or safety conscience decisions that impact on the public interest. (Particularly in the entertainment area thereby ignoring harm minimisation affects where alcohol consumption is prevalent)

The GCCC has a requirement to ensure pedestrian footpaths are not restricted or impacted by development thereby ensuring safe amenity. Development Approvals call for sheds and offices to be located on top of gantries elevated above footpaths so that the pathways remain open to pedestrian access. This would be in conformity with health workplace and safety requirements. However, that is not a deterrent for the GCCC. The GCCC permit the Soul development on the Esplanade to close the pedestrian footpath during work hours and divert pedestrians across to the eastern side of the Esplanade. If these pedestrians are walking north to the adjoining apartment buildings at Grosvenor Beachfront or Zenith Apartments they are required to recross the traffic busy Esplanade where no designated crossing exists or support is available. The same exists at the Hilton Hotel on Orchard Avenue.

The Gold Coast Motor Events Co (GCMEC) operates in consultation with the GCCC, who are the trustees and caretakers of Macintosh Island Park as well as the Gold Coast Highway and the immediate area, and are a reporting agency with respect to safety. But the GCMEC, with no objections from the GCCC, have for many years dismantled nearly all the highway lights in the highway median strip for the advantage of spectator stands for the vested interest Indy/SuperGP. This leaves the very busy Gold Coast Highway in darkness in a built up and urbanized locality but during a new moon in total darkness. These lights would be ‘down’ for three months, that was until a pedestrian was hit by a motorist on the Gold Coast Highway in the immediate area and killed. It took a community advocacy group to create change. It did not come voluntarily. Pedestrian crossings are eliminated to benefit the GCMEC and the event to the detriment and safety of the public. No footpath exists from the traffic lights to the south side bus stop as it would impact on the viability and safety of the motor race event. So, for a four day tourist event the public are safety-disadvantaged for 360 days of the year.

It will be shown that this 'unbalanced' attitude that favours commercial outcomes by the GCCC is reflected through many of their decisions.

The GCCC has for many years been responsible for reducing the size or total elimination of the very few open space amenities within the entertainment area of Surfers Paradise that provides 'chill out' locations or the like. The GCCC also overtake these amenity areas for car parking or for the creation of inadequate public toilet amenities that detract from their real purpose. But thousands upon thousands of young adult's walk or simply congregate in the streets of the entertainment area where a gross shortage of public toilets exists. This lack of strategic infrastructure then contributes to torment and potential violence from inebriated young adults who have to queue or cannot locate public toilets. This leads to public urination in the main streets.

There was a small park where the International Forum is now located that contained public toilets. This park was amalgamated into the Forum development and the toilet facilities lost. A stipulation of the development approval required two toilets be part of the public amenity of the development. The condition (toilets) for the loss of public park amenity never materialised. Apparently, due to intravenous drug-taking the toilets have been locked for years and access not permitted. To solve the problem the GCCC constructed a module of toilets at grade on the footpath in Cavill Avenue that does nothing for the street scape. Since then the GCCC has constructed further facilities on the foreshore verge at the southern end. Lionel Perry Park lost part of its amenity for the Avalon complex. Part of the developer contribution was a requirement for public toilets in the park. The same has happened at Appel Park on Ferny Avenue. But the entertainment precinct continues to expand whilst the GCCC makes little provision for future public toilet infrastructure.

It had a financial commitment from the developer of the Hilton Hotel to fund public infrastructure such as toilets. The developer was provided with offsetting and extremely generous building concessions outside the statutory planning scheme provided he made the financial commitment to public works. The DA was approved. Due to the Global Economic Crisis the new developer pleaded hardship and the possible intention not to proceed with the development and leave a hole in the ground unless the GCCC dropped the \$2 million contribution. The GCCC accepted the plea and the developer was relieved of the public infrastructure condition – but what did not happen was for the developer to forfeit the concessions achieved outside code on the basis of the financial contribution to public infrastructure.

This summary is provided to illustrate that the GCCC outrightly favours the unbalanced private interest over the public interest. This is typical of the modus operandi at the GCCC. It also establishes that public infrastructure that is part of 'harm minimisation' or 'contributing affects' with the potential to trigger alcohol related violence is not an adequate part of the social agenda and/or social responsibility at the GCCC.

7.2 Passenger transport requirements late at night and the capacity for people affected by alcohol to become violent due to transport not meeting their wishes

Meaningful inroads have been made into passenger transport for 'clubbers' at the key areas such as Surfers Paradise and Broadbeach so that they are not lingering around unnecessarily when in a state of intoxication and potential violence. It is acknowledged that queuing for buses or cabs is a prime location for violence from alcohol induced persons external to nightclubs. Queensland transport provides a convoy security service that follows late night and early morning buses. Bus services have been increased at these times.

Gold Coast taxi numbers have been increased from around 300 to some 350. This number of cabs is considered to be the peak number for the immediate future before the taxi service would go into serious decline. In other words the industry would not be able to attract drivers as the level of financial reimbursement would be far too low – well below the basic wage. The industry tinkers on the edge of this condition at the moment. Taxi driving from Monday to Friday, income wise, does not provide meaningful income unless the driver is retired and is supplementing a pension. That same person does not want to work the more dangerous night shift and if he does he would probably not venture to the Surfers Paradise rank.

The multi hire maxi cab service has from all intentional purposes been a success.

This submission understands the need to be innovative when it comes to moving people quickly out of the entertainment precinct when they feel they have had enough for the evening or are intoxicated or both.

7.3 Ease of access to public transport

Access to passenger transport for the Broadbeach entertainment precinct is excellent. It is central and convenient located at either end of Victoria Mall. But the same cannot be said for the Surfers Paradise Entertainment precinct.

The Cavill Avenue rank is centrally convenient but is not central to the core nightclub entertainment precinct at Orchid Avenue. Such a rank existed but it was moved from the southern end of orchid Avenue to the less accessible and remote northern end to facilitate the private development and construction of the Hilton Hotel. There can be little doubt that this has been a serious error of judgement and is, commensurate with my experiences, the direct cause of alcoholic violence and mayhem. For taxi's to have to drive empty down the one way Orchid Avenue to get to the rank is a dangerous exercise. Intoxicated clubbers race to the vacant taxi only to be ignored, as is required by the operator, which all too often results in violence and aggression. Taxi's are constantly kicked or struck. This is poor civic planning. Civic needs and public safety were forfeited to make way for private enterprise.

The bus stop was moved from its central and convenient location on Surfers Paradise Boulevard due to the Hilton Hotel construction. The new location remains central but the queuing is undertaken outside the less secure Paradise Centre. Once again improvisation has taken place that facilitates the private sector and enterprise to the detriment of public safety and social convenience.

7.4 Public transport ranks or transport hubs and the surrounding environment that is required to deter alcohol induced violence

As an architectural lighting designer I am adequately qualified to advise that night-time urban lighting in Surfers Paradise proper is substandard. But this failed outcome is very much the case at the three local taxi ranks. Until recently there were no queuing barriers at the principal Cavill Avenue rank, notwithstanding that queue can be as long as thirty metres at peak times on Saturday nights. Much violence was generated by clubbers seeking to jump the queue or by mouthing off.

The taxi ranks are inadequately planned or constructed to provide orderly conduct from intoxicated clubbers. After pushing the taxi company to lobby the GCCC a barrier was erected in Cavill Avenue. This is unacceptable as much aggravation and violence is generated from alcoholic clubbers standing for a period of time in a long queue. Issues emerge such as queue jumping or unsavoury comments. Part of this Cavill Avenue hub is the all-night fast-food outlets that serve take-away items such as pizza and kebabs. This causes clubbies to congregate and get in each others way on the pathway that is not wide enough at this location, with the potential for irrational alcohol related violence. A refusal by a taxi driver to deny access to an intoxicated clubber whilst eating a kebab and capable of spoiling the taxi cab can be the cause of a change in mood and alcohol based violence towards a taxi driver.

This summary seeks to illustrate the lack of professional planning by the local authority that does not take into account local conditions and harm minimisation and the need to disperse clubbers in an orderly fashion as quickly as possible once they have decided the night is over.

The Divisional Councillor for Surfers Paradise promoted an outrageous plan to use the Transit Centre as the principal taxi rank facility in Surfers Paradise. It is not central; it is not easily accessible being a possible three hundred metres from the Orchid Avenue club precinct and is very poorly lit as is the access route being Beach Road. It is this lack of qualified input that is causing confusion and mayhem in Surfers Paradise.

The QG Department of Transport have much to answer for over their failure to properly orchestrate good passenger transport industry standards over ongoing and numerous conflicts that erupted around the taxi ranks in Surfers Paradise (and other locations) between the taxi and limousine services. The DOT did not enforce or uphold lawful process. The limousines were given a free hand and allowed to run amuck. This on numerous occasions saw Cavill Avenue resembling pit straight at a motor race event. This did not contribute to harm minimisation.

7.5 Patron numbers on or within Licensed Premises during hours of operation

Although there is a calculation for the number of patrons on licensed premises at any one time concern exists over saturation of the premises by clubbers. It was evident from the taxi experience and discussion within the taxi that alcohol related violence was generated in the clubs from lack of space and such events as someone pushing though and accidentally spilling drink over another clubber. Intolerance appears to be a stand out personality trait in the stories that were discussed or overheard in the taxi cab.

7.6 Patron saturation within the entertainment precinct at Surfers Paradise

In the interest of public safety the GCCC was requested some two years ago by resolution raised (by me) at the Surfers Paradise Police CCC to restrict the number of nightclubs in the Surfers Paradise entertainment precinct due to people saturation. That request appears to have fallen on deaf ears although a response was received from the Divisional Councillor.

The principal entertainment area in Surfers Paradise for clubbers is Orchid Avenue followed by Cavill Avenue, which includes the mall.

Surfers Paradise Police have been known to restrict or block vehicular traffic into Orchid Avenue for safety purposes due to disruptions that take place from time to time. For instance convoys of hooners have been known to undertake circuits that include Orchid Avenue. Other times include the Schoolies festival due to the vast volume of people that saturate the principal entertainment precinct and make it unsafe. Quite clearly the capacity for safe and orderly movement of people within this precinct has been exceeded. When this level of saturation takes place the conduct later in the evening as intoxicated patrons or clubbers mingle in the open the precinct becomes unsafe and dangerous and liable to alcohol related violence. I for one am not satisfied with the response from the GCCC. This level of unsafe saturation of a precinct is simply socially unacceptable. This submission points much of the blame at the GCCC and town planning issues. More and more clubs obtain licenses to operate nightclubs within this precinct where people saturation has already been achieved.

7.7 Police administration in the entertainment precinct

The performance of QP where innovative thinking and timely, if not hasty, decisions are taken outside the square the result is considered nothing but exceptional. QP at Surfers Paradise are to be complimented. With some 130 police officers stationed at Surfers Paradise it is the opinion of this submission that numbers of police is not an issue. It is to be remembered that these numbers are supplemented at different times of the year through different agency support within QP. With intelligence and preplanning playing a pre-emptive role in the QP administration of tourist events and a firmer policy on law and order it is apparent that QP are meeting challenges.

7.8 Containment of the entertainment precinct

Once again, of much civic concern is the liberal attitude and free market policy at the GCCC that continues to approve nightclub operations to ever expanding extremities of the village. The GCCC has approved a nightclub venture at a new development proposed on the northern side of Cypress Avenue (North side). It has approved (and operating) a nightclub on the south side of Surfers Paradise on Surfers Paradise Boulevard between Clifford and Laycock Streets. The GCCC is seeking to take the entertainment precinct west beyond Surfers Paradise across the Nerang River to Bundall. A bar type operation exists as far south as Thornton Street on SP Boulevard. This is an alarming situation that displays no respect or regard for well established residential domains as well as tourist and family holiday accommodation that are impacted by noise and from time to time alcohol based violence.

This outcome will be a true test for QP as these new nightclubs substantially expand the territory that they need to cover in pursuit of on-ground precautionary and surveillance services. In time there will be infill of nightclubs within this expanded territory. It probably triples the nighttime foot area for QP. This will place definite demand on QP personnel numbers and vastly spread the area of containment. The social impact by these expanding nightclubs is changing the face of Surfers Paradise. It is becoming less and less a family destination (probably expired) and more and more a 'red-light/clubbing' area. The boundaries probably now exceed that of the Kings Cross entertainment precinct of Sydney.

7.9 The conversion of Surfers Paradise into a predominant 'clubbing' precinct

When and who paved the way for the liberal attitude at the GCCC towards increased nightclubs and licensed premises is hard to pinpoint. But what we do know is that the Mayor and the Divisional Councillor for Surfers Paradise were both financially supported (substantially) by the Licensed Clubs Association at the 2004 Local Authority Elections.

The Divisional Councillor for Surfers Paradise has in the past been linked to Mr. Billy Cross a former substantial nightclub owner and the promoter of the New Year Festival at the Spit. In 2008 the Councillor had to refrain from voting over the allocation of a 'one only' event at the Spit for Mr. Billy Cross as she

disclosed a conflict of interest in his favour. The Mayor revealed that however the Councillor would vote would be his choice over the Spit. Whereas there is no proposal of anything improper it raises the question of how strong the nightclub lobby might be within the GCCC.

It is to be remembered that the GCCC approve the premises to function as a club but it is the Liquor Licensing Branch at QP who approve and issue the licenses to operate as licensed premises. As these two are partners in the process the community seek to have both entities show restraint towards the issue of more licenses in a precinct that has an over abundance of licensed clubs that all too often are the meeting place and feeder of alcohol related violence.

8.0 Executive Summary by the GCCC

This submission submits that the tourist industry, that embraces nightclub activities, should be a responsible and safe industry. It is not believed that is the case at present.

8.1 Trading hours of licensed premises

This submission supports the position of the GCCC.

8.2 Assessment of liquor license applications

This submission is critical of the mixed-use development strategy conducted by the GCCC. There are a number of examples but the most prominent example is the Swell Tavern in Burleigh heads. It is open until 3.00am on weekends and has live music. It is a requirement of the development approval that the noise be contained within the premises, however at Swell it reverberates across the entire village impacting on the permanent residential community and amenity, affecting not only the peace and quiet of those village components but very much the residential and tourist accommodation attached to the Swell mixed-use development. Swell has been the source of extensive alcohol related violence.

This submission questions the level of proactive accountability of licensed premises that are found to be the cause of social unrest and division within community as well as the ongoing source of alcohol related complaints including violence. There can be little doubt that the GCCC contributes to social dislocation through, in the first place, unsatisfactory location of licensed premises.

A further example is the recent development approval of residential (and mixed-use) accommodation directly opposite the Treetops Tavern at West Burleigh. This precinct is a totally commercially contained precinct but the GCCC approved the out of kilter residential accommodation along with a high care aged nursing facility. This is nothing less than problem-creating and inconsiderate planning approvals.

This submission seeks to establish that the GCCC is all too embracing and favourable towards commercial outcomes without proper and responsible regard for balanced, safe and socially acceptable outcomes. It could be inferred that this attitude may also be reflected in its decisions over harm minimisation where alcohol affected clubbers congregate and mingle. Certainly, this submission claims that to be the case in Surfers Paradise over the dismal state of the taxi rank on Cavill Avenue and the inadequate provision of pathway and footpath illumination. The former taxi rank on Orchard Avenue is an indictment on the GCCC for putting the convenience of private enterprise ahead of safety and transport outcomes that make a substantial difference to harm minimisation.

8.3 Issues for frontline staff

This submission is not qualified to assess QP personnel requirements but does recognize that 130 officers at Surfers Paradise and near on 900 throughout the Gold Coast is a substantial number of police officers.

It is understood that QP substantially increase the numbers of police personnel stationed on the Gold Coast when and as required in keeping with tourist and major event needs. With the 'Schoolies' festival kicking off in a few days time, this is such an event where police numbers are dramatically increased.

The passenger transport industry, particularly taxis, has been ignored by the GCCC. Taxi drivers, more than any other individuals, are at the very frontline of alcoholic violence and abuse and all too often have to deal with the impacts in remote locations where assistance is not available and at times are grossly outnumbered. This attitude by the GCCC reflects their failure to provide safe and secure taxi ranks.

8.4 Harm minimisation measures

Alcohol related violence by young adults probably has its roots in the culture of binge drinking and the mixing of drugs and alcohol. Today's generation, generally speaking, appear to have an attitude problem and if so that is a serious social issue. I guess that leads to the suggestion that irresponsible alcohol and drug intake may be impacting on young adults with wrong attitude. It cannot be said that this is common place but is it the bad apple in the case syndrome. What must be embraced is that alcohol abuse is a domestic and parenting problem that is being condoned or pardoned in the family home.

QP are not trained as nurses and are not expected to hold 'clubbers' hands and be personal mentors or the parish priest. Does this indicate that a new taskforce may be required to deal with this type of social problem? I have been led to believe that the GCCC 'chill out' service has been successful.

There can be little doubt that education systems must embrace options for dealing with binge drinking and at time violent endemic culture. But how the State goes about dealing with a social problem in the home is a problem this submission will not attempt to deal with.

But this submission is critical of local authority planning decisions that impact adversely on society. It is considered that the GCCC fails to strike a reasonable balance between the private and public interest or commercial and social outcomes. It fails to deliver acceptable and well thought out infrastructure requirements that provide harm minimisation outcomes. It is seen as a local authority that makes ad hoc decisions on the run and operates all too often from a position of damage control rather than following a strategic plan for the city. The Gold Coast Planning Scheme has been torn to shreds. The GCCC is a local authority that puts cost before secure safe outcomes. It is a local authority that succumbs to assisting commercial ventures over public safety. A substantial dossier by a community group outlines this conduct to the Queensland Government and the Coroner over the death of a young adult where essential city services (street lighting) had been removed for a tourist event for an extended time creating total darkness on the Gold Coast Highway. A footpath to the bus stop did not exist because it could interfere with the event. Pedestrian crossings are rearranged to benefit the tourist event whilst placing the public at large in unsafe predicaments. And it stays that way all year round for commercial convenience – the public and their safety are ignored.

And that is the case in Orchid Avenue, Surfers Paradise. The uncontrollable development approvals make little allowance for sustainable and orderly outcomes. The pathways are widened for so-called pedestrian friendly access and beautification, but before they are finished the GCCC has leased the footpath space to restaurants for commercial dining purposes leaving the minimum of two metres for pedestrian access between the building and the new dining precinct on the footpath. In other words the new footpaths are narrower for access than before the rearrangements and create conflict.

The GCCC is operating an active market economy modus operandi that prejudices public safety and orderly facilitation in many locations but none more than Surfers Paradise. A new multi million dollar foreshore redevelopment in Surfers Paradise is all about tourist and patron facilitation, particularly Schoolies and major events, but has nothing to do with harm minimisation within Surfers Paradise.

Commercial outcomes all too often reign supreme over social betterment, safety and harm minimisation.

Yours truly,

Don Magin

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29.11.2009

Church Secretary/Leader

Dear Friends,

Please permit me to reach out to you as a fellow Christian with a personal appeal. I am sometimes regarded as a community advocate, but am always considered a caring member of our Gold Coast community.

On Friday evening, 27.11.09, at around 9.45pm I travelled by Surfside Busline from North Burleigh to Surfers Paradise to experience firsthand the conduct on the buses and secondly to take in the spectacle at Surfers Paradise known as Schoolies.

The bus journey was a sensation with young inebriated teenagers mingling at bus stops along the route seeking passage to the 'glitter strip'. Opposite Nobby's Beach at Miami with the bus full to capacity the driver permitted passengers to alight but refused entry to new passengers. Upon being refused entry two unruly and inebriated teenagers unleashed a tirade that saw one of the teenagers throw a drink bottle through a rear window of the bus. This had the potential to have maimed passengers in the immediate area. These were not Schoolies but Gold Coast youth.

The mood and feeling at Surfers Paradise and Schoolies was one of confusion and at times threatening behaviour. Examples of bad conduct were on display for all too witness. This story is not about these incidences that generate concern but rather the publications contained in the Weekend Bulletin, "P-plate drinks idea for Surfers" and separately "Learner drinking permit"

Ms Laura Younger is the President of the Surfers Paradise and Broadbeach Chamber of Commerce and a member of the Surfers Paradise Association (SPA). She was found endorsing licensed venues as a haven and shelter for underage kids to have lawful authority to retreat too. The recommendation is that under-age kids be granted strictly supervised access to licensed venues through a probationary drinking system.

The long-standing Chairman of Surfers Paradise Association (SPA) that markets Surfers Paradise is Mr. Graeme Downie and he is quoted in the Bulletin as saying, "They (Schoolies) come here to get drunk and this way they can be controlled." The Queensland Government has just established a Parliamentary Inquiry into Alcohol Related Violence over their concerns that binge drinking by young Queensland adults may not be controllable - contrary to the opinions of Mr. Downie.

Mr. Downie has reigned over a long period of publicized unacceptable behaviour in Surfers Paradise as the Chair of SPA whilst remaining part owner of licensed premises in Surfers Paradise, as is Mr. Greg Cox. Mr Lino Girardi is President of the Surfers Paradise Licensed Venues Association and is also a Director of SPA. It is my opinion that these community representatives participating on a public agency who operate or own licensed premises represent an unacceptable conflict and risk to the moral fabric of the teenagers and young adults of the Gold Coast. Although not an essential consideration I propose that they fail to be symbolic of the general traders they are meant to represent. These three representatives have a particular vested purpose with marketing Surfers Paradise and many would say it is not compatible with maintaining Surfers

Paradise as a family, safe and responsible tourist destination. The Weekend Bulletin is ample evidence of their agenda – the proposed reduction of the age limit for licensed premises.

My appeal is that your Following, Board or Church Leader write to the GCCC CEO requesting that Messrs. Downie, Cox and Girardi (and separately Younger) be dismissed from the SPA by the GCCC due to a conflict of ethical interest and be replaced with independent representatives who hold a more balanced, sensitive and respectable point of view towards the wholesome marketing of Surfers Paradise. Not the inclusion of Directors within a public agency auspiced by the GCCC that seek to create lawful retreats for masses of underage teenagers within licensed premises as a means off getting them off the streets.

I understand that it is easier or preferable for Church Groups to remain faithful to their immediate fellowship and following, however, binge drinking and accompanying violence by the broader 'young community' is at epidemic proportions. It is a social scourge that is undermining the very foundations of our society.

Please consider support for my mission. Please do not pass this request over as someone else's problem as the advocates of a moderate and more fulfilling lifestyle have historically fallen onto the shoulders of Christian outreach and compassion.

You are welcome and encouraged to speak with me personally on this issue; but if nothing else please inform the GCCC that their tolerance of representatives on public Boards who support teenage underage consumption of alcohol as outlined in this Weekend Bulletin must cease.

Blessings,

Don Magin