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The Research Director
Law Justice and Safety Committee
Parliament House
Brisbane QLD 4000

And via e-mail: ljsc@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Sir

Law Justice and Safety Committee Inquiry into Alcohol-Related Violence

Please find enclosed the submission of the Liquor Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union, Queensland Branch, Union of Employees to the *Law Justice and Safety Committee Inquiry into Alcohol-Related Violence*.

The LHMU, Queensland Branch, welcomes this inquiry and looks forward to the outcome.

Yours faithfully,

Gary Bullock
Secretary
LHMU(Q)

Introduction

The Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union, Queensland Branch, Union of Employees is a broad-based trade union representing approximately 28 000 employees across an array of industries and occupations in Queensland. The LHMU, Queensland Branch, is a registered trade union in Queensland and is transitionally registered in the federal system. In addition, the LHMU, Queensland Branch operates as the state branch of the federal union, the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union.

The LHMU, Queensland Branch (LHMU), will be addressing the following terms of reference of the inquiry into alcohol-related violence as the LHMU is best placed to address these specific terms of reference:

- **Best practice harm-minimisation measures in other Australian and international jurisdictions, including specific measures such as restrictions on use of glass;**
- **The impact of late opening hours on incidences of alcohol-related violence;**
- **The flow-on issues for emergency service workers, police, and front-line health workers of alcohol-related violence;**
- **Education campaigns and their role in cultivating effective social change in terms of community attitudes to alcohol consumption;**
- **The economic costs of alcohol-related violence.**

The LHMU intends to address the terms of reference of the inquiry from an industrial relations perspective. The LHMU will address the terms of reference of the inquiry as they relate to the incidence of alcohol-related violence in the workplace affecting LHMU members in their respective capacities as employees within identified industries of LHMU coverage.

The LHMU, Queensland Branch's areas of membership coverage adversely affected by alcohol-related violence in the workplace include ambulance employees, hospitality employees and security employees.

Methodology

The LHMU utilised quantitative and qualitative research techniques in order to gain an understanding of the effect of alcohol-related violence on members of the LHMU employed in identified high-risk industries, including hospitality, security and ambulance.

The LHMU sought input from hospitality and security members, including the occupations of security guard, crowd controller, bar worker, bar management and gaming worker, working in clubs, pubs, hotels, taverns, casinos, community/sporting clubs and at special events.

The LHMU additionally engaged with, and surveyed, its membership working for the Queensland Ambulance Service including the occupations/classifications of patient transport officer, advanced care paramedic, intensive care paramedic, communications officer and sections of ambulance management.

The LHMU surveyed its ambulance membership via an online survey, receiving 142 responses. The survey provided both quantitative and qualitative data.

The LHMU surveyed its hospitality and security membership via phone surveying, with a total of 228 members being surveyed, providing quantitative data.

The LHMU also conducted a focus group, and case studies.

The LHMU has endeavoured to put forward the collective voice of its membership in these high-risk industries.

The LHMU has attempted to frame its submission in a succinct manner for the purpose of clarity and efficiency.

Background to Submission

Major sections of the LHMU membership, including hospitality, security and ambulance, are frequently subject to alcohol-related violence in their workplaces and suffer not only physical but psychological symptoms which affect their productivity as workers. The effects upon workers flow-on to organisations, families and the community.

Some illustrative statistics gained from surveying of LHMU membership include:

- 71% of security/hospitality members surveyed report that in the last 5 years they have been assaulted or verbally abused by an intoxicated person whilst performing their duties as employees;
- 94.37% of ambulance members surveyed report that during the course of performing their duties for the Queensland Ambulance Service within the past 5 years, they have been abused or assaulted by an intoxicated patient or bystander.

Ambulance employees surveyed report the following specific incidences of alcohol-related violence experienced in the workplace in the past five years:

- 38.03% of ambulance respondents report being punched by an intoxicated patient or bystander;
- 33.1% of ambulance respondents report being kicked by an intoxicated patient or bystander;
- 52.11% of ambulance respondents report being spat at or on by an intoxicated patient or bystander;
- 42.96% of ambulance respondents report having an object thrown at them by an intoxicated patient or bystander.

More generally, 92.96% of ambulance members surveyed report that during the course of their employment with the Queensland Ambulance Service in the past 5 years they have noticed an increase in intoxicated patients or bystanders, 92.25% noticed an increase in the intensity of alcohol-related violence and 92.96% noticed an increase in the frequency of alcohol-related violence. 87.32% of ambulance respondents report feeling unsafe as a result of intoxicated persons they have been required to treat, or persons in the vicinity of the area in which ambulance employees are providing emergency care.

LHMU Response to Terms of Reference of the Inquiry

Best practice harm-minimisation measures in other Australian and international jurisdictions, including specific measures such as restrictions on use of glass

In the first instance, the LHMU supports best practice harm-minimisation measures recognised by the Inquiry in its original terms of reference document including:

- Serving alcohol in plastic receptacles rather than glass;
- Security measures – both inside venues and in public places and transport nodes (crowd controllers, marshals, police presence, ID scanning, CCTV);
- Limiting promotions that encourage irresponsible consumption (happy hours, free or cheap alcoholic drinks, drinking contests);
- Enhanced liquor licensing, enforcement, regulation and inspection regimes;
- Community involvement in the licensing application process;
- Built design initiatives, affecting the size, layout and variety of venues;
- Ensuring the availability of safe and adequate transport options;
- Reducing the availability of full-strength alcohol at certain venues and events;
- Better planning of entertainment districts;
- The establishment of liquor industry accords and similar partnerships to address alcohol-related safety and security issues;
- Creation of an effective offence and penalty framework;
- Restrictions on advertising;
- Pricing and taxation measures;
- Reducing the alcoholic content of beverages.

Further, the LHMU supports the extension of those measures, by the introduction of broad reaching harm-minimisation measures that cut across identified industries, and via measures specific to individual industries.

The LHMU has attempted to split the harm-minimisation measures into relevant categories, however, it must be noted that all harm-minimisation measures are interconnected and must be collectively implemented as part of an overall policy.

The LHMU supports the trialling of the following harm-minimisation measures, in the first instance to assess their efficacy, and if successful, to be introduced:

General Measures

- Continued identification and management of high-risk precincts and specific venues;
- Further development and increased training of best practice venue management, with the ultimate responsibility and consequences for management of venues in the hands of relevant managers not lower level employees;
- The provision of mandatory training in violence management for all employees in identified high-risk industries (including assertive speech, incident diffusion techniques and verbal escalation and de-escalation tactics);

- Prioritisation of revenue gained from licensing fees to be directed to research into alcohol-related violence causes and harm-minimisation measures, and implementation of those measures.

Removal of glass

- Replacement of glass drinking receptacles with plastic drinking receptacles;
- Phasing out of other glass items, such as glass ashtrays, in high-risk venues;
- Restriction on the use of glass in licensed premises, night clubs and hotel venues with late trading hours and in high-risk entertainment precincts.

Removal of weapons

- Gradual phase out/further restriction of other items that could be used as weapons, eg. pool cues;
- LHMU endorses development and implementation of weapons screening initiatives.

Security

- Increased quality and quantity of CCTV footage of patrons and drinkers (suitable for evidentiary purposes);
- Replacement of passive systems of CCTV with human monitored systems (to overcome the problem with passive systems only recording event in time material in the direct vicinity of cameras);
- Further development and implementation of identification systems, including scanned photo identification;
- Development and trialling of monitored systems of warning, for example, flash card warning systems;
- Increased visible police presence to curb alcohol-related violence. Police presence is particularly important in reversing the negative effects of alcohol-related violence. 88.03% of ambulance employees surveyed report that during the past 5 years they have had to call for assistance or back-up due to alcohol-related violence and 91.55% of ambulance employees surveyed have noticed an increased frequency of police needing to be called to the scene as a result of alcohol-related violence.

Legal System Reform

- Legal system to impose harsher penalties against offenders in glass attacks;
- Legal system to impose harsher penalties against offenders who abuse/assault employees in venues or emergency service employees;
- Commitment of government agencies to thorough investigations leading to prosecution;
- Legal system committed to prosecuting venues for breaches of relevant legislation. Currently, 42% of hospitality/security members surveyed do not believe the Liquor Act and Regulations and the Security Providers Act are sufficient to protect workers and the community in these industries;

- Legislative reform to put in place tougher penalties against managers of venues and licensees for non-compliance with relevant legislation.

Transport

- Continued review and planning of transport around entertainment precincts;
- Increased provision and availability of public transport in identified areas at targeted times.

Industry Specific Measures

Security Industry Specific Measures

- Enforcement of compliance with current ratios of crowd controllers to patrons under the Liquor Regulation 2002. 31% of hospitality/security members surveyed report they have witnessed breaches of ratios of crowd controllers to patrons;
- Review of ratios, particularly for simultaneously held events as ratios are currently inadequate on certain occasions. 35% of hospitality/security members surveyed report that security measures for the size and type of their venue are inadequate;
- Greater level of regulation of crowd controllers;
- Review of *Security Providers Act 1993* to reflect and recognise different streams of security providers, and the training required;
- Introduction of high profile security/crowd controllers to curb unruly behaviour at the outset.

Hospitality Industry Specific Measures

- Enforcement of strict compliance with the Liquor Act and Regulations. 44% of hospitality/security members surveyed state they have witnessed breaches of responsible service of alcohol regulations in the past 5 years;
- Zero-tolerance towards non-compliance with Liquor Act and responsible service of alcohol obligations, with a particular focus on the responsibilities of venue managers/licensees;
- Higher penalties for establishments who breach the Liquor Act and regulations;
- Highly visible and targeted compliance blitz operations;
- Development of best practice venue management guidelines coupled with the implementation of those guidelines;
- Development of anonymous reporting systems if employees need to report their employer for non-compliance;
- Community involvement and consultation in licensing process;
- A significantly enhanced standard of staff training in these industries including mandatory refresher courses in RSA/RSG.

The LHMU conducted a focus group in the hospitality industry as part of its information gathering endeavours in order to address the terms of reference of the Inquiry.

The focus group provided some valuable ideas for possible harm-minimisation measures including:

- The implementation of a state-wide database recording the names of serious repeat offenders. Serious repeat offenders could be banned from all venues;

- Introduction of a curfew for serious repeat offenders with penalties attached to breaking curfew;
- Education of *patrons* in responsible service of alcohol principles, including the signs of intoxication employees are obliged to act upon – inclusion of signage and information in venues;
- Introduction of police 'Marshals' to be employed by the government and included in the security roster of venues. The purpose of these Marshals to be to monitor patron behaviour and levels of intoxication;
- Fines imposed on employees and licensees who serve alcohol to intoxicated patrons to be extended to the patrons themselves.

The LHMU surveyed its membership to gain their collective position regarding specific harm-minimisation measures put forward by the Inquiry.

The statistics gathered by the LHMU confirm that employees in high-risk industries support alcohol-related violence harm-minimisation measures as follows:

- 71% of hospitality/security members surveyed support the replacement of glass with plastic receptacles;
- 97% of hospitality/security members surveyed support the imposition of tougher sentences imposed against offenders in glass attacks;
- 85% of hospitality/security members surveyed support stronger enforcement and compliance with relevant legislation and regulations;
- 79% of hospitality/security members surveyed support higher ratios of security guards to patrons;
- 88% of hospitality/security members surveyed support increased quantity and quality of CCTV footage;
- 85% of hospitality/security members surveyed support continued public education campaigns;
- 79% of hospitality/security members surveyed support industry consultative forums;
- 91% of hospitality/security members surveyed support improved provision of transportation around venues;
- 54% of hospitality/security members surveyed support reducing the alcohol content of beverages.

Queensland Ambulance Service Specific Measures

Ambulance employees were asked to provide qualitative responses to the question of identification of best practice harm-minimisation measures. The LHMU received a plethora of valuable responses to this open-ended question.

The following are a collection of responses received by LHMU ambulance membership regarding what those members think are important harm-minimisation measures:

"Have a rave safe type provider in key areas around the busy club areas to allow an alternative to be used instead of calling emergency services. Serious cases can then be referred by these places if required".

"Introduce mandatory education at early high school level for responsible drinking".

"Change the culture of going out".

"More prosecution of Pubs and Clubs for serving alcohol affected patrons. The drunks cannot make a valid decision about what they are doing so the only way to control it is to hurt the commercial viability of the venues. Also make drunkenness in general an unacceptable social condition in the same way that drink driving is".

"Community education with regard to consequences of assault/abuse against emergency services".

"Enforcement of laws fining Publicans for serving alcohol to intoxicated patrons".

"The public need to be made aware that if you act like a fool when drunk in public or display violence to anybody you will be penalised".

"Greater education of bartenders/managers about the intoxication/injuries/illness and trouble they cause by serving alcohol to intoxicated patrons".

"All cases that involve abusive and alcohol substance related incidents require immediate despatch of the QPS by the communication centres. Staff should not approach the patient/patients until the QPS have arrived on scene".

"QAS officers need...an education seminar on tactics on how to best deal with alcohol-related patients".

In general, ambulance membership surveyed by the LHMU support the following harm-minimisation measures:

- The provision of mandatory training in violence management (including assertive speech, incident diffusion techniques and verbal escalation and de-escalation tactics);
- The provision of mandatory self defence training for all QAS employees, and annual renewal of competencies as part of in-service education. 86.62% of ambulance members surveyed report they support mandatory self-defence training as part of their training provided by the Queensland Ambulance Service;
- The introduction of personal protective equipment for ambulance employees (including personal duress alarm linked to ambulance communication centres, functional portable radio systems, stab proof vests (to be worn on Friday/Saturday nights or when informed job is psychiatric/domestic violence));
- Increased police presence in high-risk areas (including the entertainment precincts of the Valley, Brisbane City and Gold Coast);
- Tougher sentences and penalties imposed on offenders who abuse or assault emergency service workers;
- Restricted availability of alcohol, including the promotion and service of low alcoholic drinks and possibly limits to the types/quantity of alcoholic drinks served to identified risk groups, such as younger persons;
- Continued restriction of trading hours of venues.

The LHMU supports the trialling of any harm-minimisation measures that may be of assistance in curbing the harmful effects of alcohol-related violence.

The impact of late opening hours on incidences of alcohol-related violence

58% of hospitality/security members surveyed state they have noticed a correlation between later opening hours and an increase in alcohol-related violence.

The LHMU supports regulation and restriction of extended trading hours. It is widely established that measured restrictions on the trading hours of venues, particularly those in high-risk areas, reduces the frequency and intensity of alcohol-related violence.

The LHMU endorses the position of the Government to reduce the trading hours of targeted venues. The LHMU supports the Queensland Government's efforts to date at restricting trading hours for identified high-risk establishments.

The LHMU considers that extended trading hours should be a privilege based upon a proven record of good venue management, not a right.

The LHMU surveyed its membership regarding the specific measure of restrictions on trading hours. 71% of hospitality/security members surveyed support the restriction of late opening hours. The LHMU also received numerous qualitative responses from ambulance officers surveyed which strongly echoed the desire to place restrictions upon trading hours.

The flow-on issues for emergency service workers, police, and front-line health workers of alcohol-related violence

The flow-on effects for emergency service workers, police and front-line health workers of alcohol-related violence are extensive and far-reaching.

The LHMU can address specifically the effect on ambulance employees.

LHMU ambulance members experience work intensification due to the complex nature of cases of patients affected by alcohol intoxication. This leads to workplace dissatisfaction. 88.73% of ambulance members surveyed report that alcohol-related violence or abuse has delayed the initiation of care or adversely affected the delivery of that care.

LHMU members also suffer workplace injuries and property damage as a result of managing intoxicated patients and bystanders. 45.77% of ambulance employees surveyed reported that they had had personal or operational equipment damaged as a result of alcohol-related violence. 11.27% of ambulance employees surveyed report having to access psychological support as a result of alcohol-related violence and 16.2% of ambulance employee surveyed report they have had to attend hospital as a result of alcohol-related violence experienced in the workplace.

The negative impacts on ambulance employees can be reduced by the implementation of the identified harm-minimisation measures.

Education campaigns and their role in cultivating effective social change in terms of community attitudes to alcohol consumption

The Government must aim to foster and promote a culture of moderation with respect to alcohol consumption and individual responsibility for behaviour.

Community education campaigns can be improved by the implementation of joint consultative forums to roll-out jointly approved, supported and well researched initiatives. For example, the LHMU along with the Queensland Council of Unions, has rolled-out a 'Can you Risk It – Zero Tolerance', workplace health and safety campaign to address the issue of alcohol-related violence in the workplace. Campaigns of this nature would be significantly assisted by support and funding from other stakeholders.

Targeted campaigns directed towards identified groups (including patrons/drinkers, parents & school children, police/security providers, emergency service workers, health workers, venue operators/managers & other staff and offenders) must continue to be developed and improved.

Tripartite consultative arrangements of relevant stakeholders in the liquor industry, including trade unions, the government and business groups are the key to the development and roll-out of influential education campaigns.

The economic costs of alcohol-related violence

The economic costs of alcohol-related violence in the Queensland community are immense, and span the individual/personal level, to a family, organisational and community level.

The costs include damage to the person, and property damage, and importantly, diminishes the standard of community safety and community enjoyment of facilities and venues.

Alcohol-related violence places a strain on health resources (including doctors, nurses, ambulance officers and other health professionals), policing resources, and justice resources, by clogging up the court system with offenders committing crimes as a result of being intoxicated.

The economic costs of alcohol-related violence can be minimised by the trialling and implementation of identified harm-minimisation measures, along with targeted government action to address the prevailing negative 'drinking' culture.

In summary, the Queensland government must consider broad-reaching education campaigns to effect cultural change, coupled with strengthening of legislative measures and the subsequent enforcement of compliance with those legislative measures.

Concluding Remarks

The LHMU advocates for a state wide management plan of alcohol-related violence affecting employees and the public in high-risk industries. The state wide management plan must be characterised by the operation of tripartite consultative forums with relevant stakeholders, including government agencies, trade unions, employers, health groups, community groups and peak representative groups. The state wide management plan must have a strong preventative orientation.

The LHMU supports the further bolstering of existing preventative measures as have been identified in this submission.

The LHMU commends the state Government's recent amendments to legislation to effect changes to trading hours and supports the Government further considering legislative change, subject to proper consultative avenues being followed.

The LHMU strongly encourages consideration of a zero-tolerance approach to legislation compliance, with a particular emphasis on the responsibilities of venue managers/licensees. The LHMU supports strict compliance and enforcement regimes. Punitive action must affect the bottom line of venues in order to be effective.

The overall management plan must identify the causes of alcohol-related violence and seek to apply targeted action to address those causes. The targeted action principally should be preventative; however, a punitive response will act as a deterrent.

The LHMU supports further research in the area of alcohol-related violence prevention. It also supports the development and implementation of targeted education campaigns to change community attitudes towards alcohol consumption, including education campaigns tailored for different areas of the community such as patrons and drinkers, school children and parents, security providers, employees and venue operators.

The LHMU looks forward to the outcomes of the Law Justice and Safety Committee's deliberations.

Gary Bullock

Secretary

Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union, Queensland Branch, Union of Employees