

### **ALCOHOL AND LICENSED PREMISES: BEST PRACTICE IN POLICING.**

#### **NDLERF MONOGRAPH.**

#### **Doherty and Roche (2003).**

Plain English summary and implications for police prepared by Roger Nicholas.

#### **Aims and Methodology**

The researchers conducted an international literature review, analysed key documents concerning legislative and organisational frameworks, and consulted with key stakeholders.

#### **Key findings:**

- In Australia, the major problematic pattern of harmful alcohol consumption relates to periodic high-level (binge) consumption. This is often associated with criminal and behavioural incidents that come to the attention of police.
- Police spend a significant amount of time dealing with violence and other behavioural offences related to alcohol consumption. Many of these issues relate to the way alcohol is served, the physical environment in which alcohol is consumed, and the ways in which relevant regulatory frameworks are enforced.
- Police enforcement strategies can be effective in reducing these patterns of harm however, police often face considerable difficulties in this enforcement because of perceived difficulties in obtaining successful prosecutions; in operationally defining licensing laws; and because of a dilution of officers' knowledge and skills in this area.
- A small number of licensed premises are associated with the majority of the alcohol-related incidents linked to licensed premises. Alcohol-related assaults are most likely to occur in inner city hotels, in the early hours of Saturday and Sunday morning and mostly involve adult males. As many as 60% of all police attendances and 90% of late night calls involve alcohol. A large number of alcohol-related incidents are not reported to police.
- The enforcement of liquor laws is most effective when: accompanied by strategies that encourage responsible server practices; modifications are made to the social and physical features of drinking environments; and, officers develop skills to better integrate knowledge of liquor laws with collaborative crime reduction and problem solving methodologies.
- Intelligence-led proactive policing is the most effective way of reducing harms around licensed premises. Police incident data and other information can assist in the mapping of alcohol-related incidents and harms. There is a significant opportunity to improve police intelligence data in this area.
- A large degree of overlap exists between the outcomes sought by police, the health sector, liquor and local government authorities and the community, in relation to alcohol-related harms in Australia. Collaboration between these groups is essential to reduce these harms. Police can, however, play an important leadership role in this regard.

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- The success of future collaborative strategies involves consideration of the social and physical drinking environments that contribute to harms; knowledge about the different styles of enforcement activities; use of problem-solving methodologies; and, the use of intelligence derived from police and non-police sources. Licensing accords between police, licensees and other stakeholders can be a useful means by which to formalise these collaborations.
- The authors outlined a series of principles of good practice in policing licensed premises. These were: ensuring that liquor licensing decisions consider community and patron safety; ensuring that management practices comply with legislative requirements; ensuring that licensed premises staff understand their legal obligations; ensuring that premises staff understand and engage in responsible server practices; ensuring that premises are designed in ways that reduce over-crowding, and excessive heat and smoke, and assist with the observation of patron behaviour; ensuring that responsible marketing strategies are used by premises; encouraging communication between venue operators and police about incidents and problem patrons; increasing the awareness of the public concerning liquor laws and the impact of alcohol-affected behaviour; ensuring that sufficient public transport is available; encouraging collaboration between key stakeholders; and, ensuring that there is a visible police presence in and around licensed venues and events.
- Five organisational factors were identified as contributing to best practice in reducing alcohol-related harms in and around licensed premises. The factors have the acronym S.P.I.C.E.
- Strategic directions: establish strategic directions for policing licensed premises and alcohol-related harm.
- Proactive policing: proactively police licensed venues, events and harms.
- Intelligence: establish intelligence gathering and analysis practices and systems that drive and evaluate police responses.
- Collaboration and integration: collaborate with liquor authorities, emergency and other service providers (government and non-government), health and welfare agencies and local communities to develop integrated responses to reduce alcohol-related incidents and harms.
- Enforcement: enforcement of liquor and other legislation impacting on management and behaviour.

## Implications for policing

A substantial proportion of the harm that is associated with alcohol intoxication occurs within, in the vicinity, or after consumption of alcohol in, licensed premises. In addition to the direct policing implications of these assaults and public disorder problems, they are also problematic for police in that they diminish public perceptions of safety. Indeed, the impact of these incidents on perceptions of public safety is not confined to those who are victims of assaults and similar incidents. Rather, it is likely that perceptions of public safety are also affected among those who witness, or hear of, these incidents either directly or via the media.

The fact that alcohol-related violence and other problems do not occur with equal frequency among all licensed premises, presents a significant opportunity for policing. This is because identifying and focussing policing attention on the problematic premises affords the opportunity to have a disproportionate impact on levels of alcohol-related violence.

It is also important that strategies to better police licensed premises are incorporated into organisational performance measurements.

The Monograph provides a very useful framework (S.P.I.C.E.) to guide police in their thinking concerning the policing of licensed premises.

A full copy of this report is available on the NDLERF website at [www.ndlerf.gov.au](http://www.ndlerf.gov.au)

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