



**AUSTRALIAN HOTELS
ASSOCIATION SUBMISSION –
INQUIRY INTO THE IMPACT OF
VIOLENCE ON YOUNG
AUSTRALIANS**



AUSTRALIAN HOTELS ASSOCIATION

PO BOX 4286

MANUKA ACT 2603

(02) 6273 4007

www.aha.org.au

CONTACTS

BILL HEALEY

NATIONAL CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

healey@aha.org.au

HAMISH ARTHUR

NATIONAL CORPORATE AFFAIRS MANAGER

arthur@aha.org.au

SUBMISSION OF AUSTRALIAN HOTELS ASSOCIATION

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 On behalf of the hotel industry in Australia, the Australian Hotels Association (“AHA”) is pleased to provide a submission to be considered as part of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth inquiry into the impact of violence on young Australians.

1.2 On 16 June, 2009, the Minister for Early Childhood Education, Childcare and Youth, and the Minister for Sport, Hon Kate Ellis MP, requested the committee inquire into and report on the impact of violence on young Australians.

1.3 The inquiry is focusing on:

- Perceptions of violence and community safety among young Australians;
- Links between illicit drug use, alcohol abuse and violence among young Australians;
- The relationship between bullying and violence on the wellbeing of young Australians;
- Social and economic factors that contribute to violence by young Australians; and
- Strategies to reduce violence and its impact among young Australians.

2. HOTEL INDUSTRY PROFILE

2.1 Australia's hotel industry is extremely diverse. Businesses that are part of our industry include small country pubs, metropolitan pubs and taverns, city bars, international standard accommodation hotels and resorts.

2.2 Key facts about Australian hotels are as follows:

- There are 6407 hotels in Australia;¹
- Australian hotels employ 260,685 people;²
- The total industry value added by pubs, taverns and bars in Australia is \$4,394,000,000 or 0.5% of Australia's gross domestic product.³

2.3 Key facts about Australian hotels that specialise in the provision of accommodation are as follows:

- There are 1276 licensed hotels in Australia with five or more accommodation rooms;
- There are a total of 88,418 rooms for accommodation in Australian hotels;
- There are a total of 232,655 bed spaces in Australian hotels;⁴
- In the financial year ending June, 2009, there were 20,925,700 room nights occupied in Australian hotels;
- In the financial year ending June, 2009, there were 15,204,100 guest

¹ Australian Hotels Association 2009

² Australian Hotels Association 2009/Australian Bureau of Statistics – Tourist Accommodation, 30 September, 2009

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics – Clubs, Pubs, Taverns and Bars 2004/2005

⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics – Tourist Accommodation, 30 September, 2009

arrivals in Australian hotels;⁵ and

- The total industry value added of Australia's accommodation businesses is \$4,774,900,000 or 0.5% of Australia's gross domestic product.⁶

2.4 Therefore, the total industry value added of Australia's entire hotel industry is 1% of Australia's gross domestic product.

2.5 The AHA represents and protects the commercial interests of hotels throughout Australia. In excess of 75% of hotels in Australia are financial members of the AHA.

3. ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND HOTELS

3.1 From the outset, it should be pointed out that anti-social behaviour in (and around) hotels is one of many settings where such behaviour occurs and, by extension, one of many settings where such behaviour by young Australians occurs.

3.2 Anti-social behaviour by customers in and around Australian hotels – no matter what the age of the people involved – is unacceptable. That's why the hotel industry has a strong commitment to minimising the incidence of such behaviour in and around hotels.

3.3 While our industry acknowledges the level of anti-social behaviour in and around hotels is unacceptable, this particular problem is not markedly worse than it was 20 or 30 years ago. In many parts of Australia, incidences of such behaviour are

⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics – Tourist Accommodation, 30 September, 2009

⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics – Accommodation Services, 25 June, 2008

today fewer per head of population than they have been. Once such example is the central business district (CBD) of Melbourne. In 1993, the population of the Melbourne CBD was 1616. By 2008, the population of this area had risen to 30,618. Using comparisons over the same period, the total number of assaults (including domestic and family violence) increased from 927 to 1991 – not anywhere near the amount the population grew. According to Victoria Police Deputy Commissioner Mr Kieran Walsh: “People have been given the impression it is war out there and it’s not. It hasn’t been as bad as what the perception is in the minds of community.”⁷

4. REASONS FOR ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR IN AND AROUND HOTELS

- 4.1 There are many varied and different reasons for anti-social behaviour among customers in and around hotels. These include irresponsible consumption of alcohol, use of illicit drugs, a combination of use of illicit drugs and alcohol, and tension between patrons caused by other factors, among many other things.

- 4.2 The hotel industry is constantly promoting the importance of Australians consuming alcohol responsibly, both when they are visiting hotels and/or in other environments. An example of this was contained in a media release issued by the AHA on 30 December, 2008 about consumption of alcohol on New Year’s Eve. In the release, the AHA’s National Chief Executive Officer, Bill Healey, said: “By all means have a good time this New Year’s Eve, but the hotel industry is firmly opposed to irresponsible drinking. Drunks in pubs are bad for business.”⁸

⁷ “The Australian”, 11 September, 2009

⁸ Appendix 1

5. LINKS BETWEEN DRUG USE, ALCOHOL AND VIOLENCE

5.1 Anti-social behaviour by hotel customers is more and more being attributed to the use of illicit drugs. The Director of Drug Monitoring with Drug and Alcohol Services South Australia, Mr Jason White, said: “The relative cost of alcohol at some venues compared to the cost of an ecstasy tablet means that some people regard the ecstasy as a better way to spend their money.”⁹

5.2 A 21-year-old engineering student – Mr Doug Fountain – at Melbourne University has provided a similar insight: “It’s basic commerce. When kids can get a pill for \$30 or \$40 that will last the whole evening, why would they spend \$100 on alcohol?”¹⁰

5.3 In April of this year, the licensee of the Commercial Hotel in the NSW city of Dubbo, Mr Rod Leonard, said: “Drugs are more than half the reason why people are fighting.”¹¹

6. STRATEGIES TO REDUCE VIOLENCE AND ITS IMPACT AMONG YOUNG AUSTRALIANS

6.1 Reducing violence and its impact among young Australians is a far broader challenge than just addressing the issue in and around hotels. Any proposed measures to combat the problem must take this into consideration.

⁹ “The Advertiser”, Adelaide, 19 October, 2009

¹⁰ “Sunday Age”, Melbourne, 4 May, 2008

¹¹ “Daily Liberal”, Dubbo, 22 April, 2009

6.2 Our industry has and continues to take significant steps to reduce the level of anti-social behaviour in and around hotels. Despite the fact that those involved are part of a small minority of the overall number of customers who visit hotels, it is unacceptable for people to behave badly in licensed premises due to the fact it poses unnecessary risks to themselves, other customers and, very importantly, hotel staff.

6.3 Recognising that anti-social behaviour in and around hotels is unacceptable for all of these reasons and many more, hoteliers across Australia are continuing to implement a range of initiatives in an attempt to minimise this problem.

6.4 These initiatives include, but are not limited to:

- Promoting responsible consumption of alcohol by customers;
- Minimising irresponsible consumption of alcohol by providing complimentary soft drinks, water and finger food;
- Restricting the sale of certain alcoholic beverages at specific times of the day or night;
- Investing millions of dollars on security measures, such as crowd controllers, adequate interior and exterior lighting, and closed-circuit television systems. On an annual basis, Australian hotels spend \$515.6 million on security¹²;
- Active participation in local liquor accords, which bring together all relevant stakeholders to devise practical methods of trying to combat the

¹² Australian Hotels – More than just a drink and a flutter, PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2009

problem;

- Establishing partnerships with local transport providers to ensure customers are able to travel home from licensed premises in a smooth, timely and cost-effective fashion;
- Adopting a zero-tolerance policy towards illicit drugs; and
- Where appropriate, serving beverages in containers other than glass.

6.5 There are numerous examples of hotels in Australia that have these and other measures in place which are designed to discourage anti-social behaviour.

6.6 In Canberra, ACT, the Academy Club (a late-night licensed venue) has acknowledged that running a safe venue makes good business sense. According to the manager of the club, Mr Liam Bryce: “We work very hard at Academy to make all our patrons safe – quality lighting out the front, RSA (responsible service of alcohol) training...free bottled water on request and strict policies on service are already in place. We are all about having a great time here – but safety has to be number one.”¹³

6.7 In Wagga Wagga, NSW, licensees have a joint list of barred patrons that is designed to stop unruly customers who are evicted from one venue moving on to another venue within this city. “If you’ve been involved in a major assault where the police have been involved or if you have committed a malicious damage offence or drug offence, you will be named on the list,” said the licensee of Wagga Wagga’s Victoria Hotel, Mr Harry Vearing.¹⁴ Offending customers

¹³ “The Chronicle”, Canberra, 15 September, 2009

¹⁴ “Daily Advertiser”, Wagga Wagga, 24 October, 2009

remain on the list for terms of three, six or 12 months. A similar system is operating in Orange, another regional city in NSW.¹⁵

6.8 Earlier this year, the Pastoral Hotel in Dubbo voluntarily introduced the following conditions in an attempt to curb anti-social behaviour:

- Serving drinks in plastic cups after midnight;
- Not serving drinks which contain more than 5% alcohol by volume;
- Not serving shots (a small glass of a straight spirit – a spirit served without ice and without any other alcoholic or non-alcoholic mixer);
- Providing free water; and
- Providing free sausage sandwiches.¹⁶

6.9 Despite it being against the law for hotels across Australia to serve alcohol to a patron who is intoxicated, critics of our industry claim this law requires greater policing. The AHA rejects this notion. An excellent example of how seriously hotels treat these obligations is the publicly-stated policy of the Highway Hotel at Plympton in suburban Adelaide, SA. Of this policy, the General Manager of the hotel, Mr Simon Adami, said: “We ask people to leave rather than tell them we’re no longer serving them alcohol. You might have one person overly drunk but 10 of his mates are still able to go to the bar and get him drinks. It just doesn’t work – if you’re at that point, then you’re out of here.”¹⁷

6.10 To go with the numerous methods of self-regulation embarked upon by hotels,

¹⁵ Appendix 2

¹⁶ “Daily Liberal”, Dubbo, 23 September, 2009

¹⁷ “Sunday Mail”, Adelaide, 13 September, 2009

licensed premises around Australia are subject to one of the most extensive and exhaustive regulatory regimes of all businesses. This means hotels face significant penalties for not complying with the various State/Territory liquor licensing acts, including staff training obligations surrounding responsible service of alcohol and capacity of venues, building fire safety requirements, food safety laws, responsible gambling obligations, occupational health and safety for staff and tobacco control (non-smoking laws). Many of these laws were enacted to keep anti-social behaviour on licensed premises to a minimum.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 Australian hotels are constantly promoting, safe, responsible and family-friendly environments for customers to enjoy food, entertainment, accommodation and/or each other's company, among many other things.
- 7.2 That's why the hotel industry has an ongoing pledge to work with all relevant stakeholders to reduce the incidence of anti-social behaviour in and around hotels by people all ages, including young Australians.
- 7.3 The AHA is keen to be a partner with government and the broader community to ensure safe venues and surrounding areas for patrons. The Association would welcome the opportunity to discuss how it can be an active participant in any strategy that may emerge from this inquiry.

Date: 17 November, 2009

APPENDIX 1



AUSTRALIAN HOTELS ASSOCIATION

24 Brisbane Avenue Barton ACT 2800 • PO Box 4286 Manuka ACT 2603 • Australia
email: aha@aha.org.au • Facsimile: (02) 6273 4011 • Telephone: (02) 6273 4007
Web: www.aha.org.au

MEDIA RELEASE

30 December, 2008

AHA: DRINK RESPONSIBLY THIS NEW YEAR'S EVE

The hotel industry has today made a fresh appeal to all Australians to drink responsibly this New Year's Eve.

The appeal was made at a backyard party – the type of event where the majority of alcohol will be consumed tomorrow.

Speaking at today's launch, the AHA's National Chief Executive Officer, Bill Healey, said: "At the end of a year where consumption of alcohol has attracted an enormous amount of publicity, the hotel industry has reinforced a series of clear and simple messages that all Australians should take notice of:

1. Consume alcohol responsibly – no matter where you are.
2. Count your drinks and avoid unnecessary top-ups.
3. Stay hydrated by consuming water and/or soft drinks in between alcoholic beverages.
4. When consuming alcohol, have something to eat as well.
5. Never drink and drive.

"By all means, have a good time this New Year's Eve, but the hotel industry is firmly opposed to irresponsible drinking.

"Drunks in pubs are bad for business."

Today's launch – in a suburban backyard – was designed to show the majority of alcohol consumption at this time of year (and indeed across the entire year) takes place away from licensed premises.

"In many instances, hotels are unfairly blamed for problems surrounding drunkenness or other forms of public anti-social behaviour," Mr Healey said. "The reality of the situation in 2008, 2009 and beyond is that many of the troublemakers arrive at licensed premises having already had a lot to drink and/or having taken illicit drugs at home, at parties or other social events.

"It's time for Australians to make a collective new year's resolution to take responsibility for their actions and consume alcohol more responsibly.

"And as the government's campaign states: 'don't turn a night out into a nightmare'."

For further information:

Bill Healey
National Chief Executive Officer
0419 627 693

Hamish Arthur
National Corporate Affairs Manager
0407 718 307

The Australian Hotels Association (AHA) is the pre-eminent tourism and hospitality industry organisation in Australia. It has around 5000 members operating general and accommodation hotels. It has a national office and branches in each State and Territory. It also has a discrete branch to represent the interests of its accommodation members that covers four and five-star properties.

APPENDIX 2

MEDIA MONITORS

back



Central Western Daily
01/07/2009
Page: 1
General News
Region: Orange NSW
Circulation: 5135
Type: Regional
Size: 615.24 sq.cms
MTWTFSS-

Page 1 of 2

Under tough new penalties, if you play up while drunk ...

Pubs won't have a bar of you

By TRACEY PRISK

TOUGH new penalties for drunken patrons could result in intoxicated people being issued with a six month blanket ban preventing them from entering a range of local pubs, clubs, wineries and restaurants.

Yesterday's official launch of the Orange Liquor Accord publicised the 'Out From One Out From All' initiative.

■ To page 2



ALL IN ACCORDANCE: The Royal Hotel's Tony McClure, Detective Superintendent Mark Szalajko, Orange Liquor Accord chairman Bill Kelly, Orange Ex-Services' Club general manager Cameron Provost and assistant manager Guy Chapman. Photo: STEVE GOSCH



Hotels strike an accord

■ From page 1

The accord is a voluntary agreement between local licensees, police and council to help prevent alcohol-related antisocial behaviour.

Accord chairman Bill Kelly said there were 16 liquor licensees who had signed on as members and all had agreed to abide by stringent penalties, ranging from an on-the-spot fine of \$550 to a six-month ban.

"All of those businesses, which are part of the accord, will be informed when someone is banned from a premises and they will keep a file of that person's details," he said.

"This will mean that they won't just be able to move on to the next hotel."

Signage promoting the Out From One, Out From All ban will be visible to patrons when they enter a licensed premises that is a member of the accord.

Detective Superintendent Mark Szalajko said he hoped the accord would dramatically reduce the number of assaults on licensed premises.

"We also see the accord as something which we can use to combat antisocial behaviour," he said.

"Where once the accord would focus on special events such as race days, now we will focus on every Friday and Saturday night."

While the accord has been operating since March, yesterday's official launch gave accord members the opportunity to raise the organisation's profile in an attempt to encourage more membership.

Orange Ex-Services' Club general manager Cameron Provost said there are between 70 and 80 local establishments that are yet to join the accord.

He said accord members would ensure there was accord membership signage in member establishments and a range of pamphlets and stickers would also explain the initiative to patrons.

Patrons who are removed from a licensed premises because of intoxication will also be issued with an expulsion card that outlines relevant sections of the Liquor Act.