

RESPONSIBLE HOSPITALITY AUDIT AND FEEDBACK INTERVENTION IN HOTELS AND REGISTERED CLUBS

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I want to give you a little bit of insight into a pilot project that we have just completed in one rural community in the Hunter area.

I will just start with some acknowledgments. We did this project in collaboration with the local Liquor Accord and also with the local licensing police and the representatives from the Department of Gaming and Racing, so they were all a part of developing this project. In terms of the local Liquor Accord, that had high representation from council and the liquor industry itself. I also want to acknowledge the project staff and our data entry person, Debbie.

Just a bit of background about why we would target licensed premises. Evidence suggests that service and management characteristics of licensed premises can be associated with excessive alcohol consumption and alcohol related harm; in saying that, some premises are more problematic than others. A study done last year, by Donnelly and Briscoe, identified that just 8% of Newcastle premises can account for 80% of all assaults occurring on licensed premises. So not all premises are causing problems – it really is just a small proportion. But we need to be able to identify what it is about those premises that puts them at risk, and what we can actually do about improving their actions - how much of it is in relation to their management characteristics and how much with the responsible service of alcohol.

Another factor that is often discussed when we are talking about alcohol related crime in licensed premises is the limited compliance and enforcement of legislation. So clearly there is legislation that exists to minimise the harm associated with alcohol, but for a number of reasons there is limited compliance with that legislation and limited enforcement.

So, just some brief figures that we pulled from the pre-test data: we identified that, of the premises that we were observing, 80% had intoxicated patrons on the premises, and of those, 95% continued to serve those intoxicated patrons, and over 70% of them were actually served three or more times. In terms of checking for age identification (ID), for those that looked or were young, it appeared that in only 12% of the premises were younger people being asked for ID. I mentioned again about the limited enforcement, it is certainly not a reflection of poor policing but rather on the capacity that the police have to be able to enforce or to breach, or even to have any cost effective enforcement tools available to them.

So another strategy we thought about, to address this problem, was the responsible hospitality audit. Audits are a relatively common approach, particularly in the liquor industry. We decided that we would develop an audit process that could encompass an educational approach and that could compliment the enforcement action. So it was not just about enforcement, but was really more about education to compliment any enforcement that might go with it. So in terms of what we mean by an audit, really we

are talking about an assessment that identifies risks and can assess compliance with best practice, and that can help identify and address the risks that occur in a premises. Research has shown that the use of audits with an educational component can improve responsible service of alcohol practices and other factors relating to alcohol related harm.

So in terms of what we meant by best practice audit, what we wanted to do was ensure that it was best practice, that we could use observational data that was gathered at peak periods – not at 10 o'clock in the morning or two o'clock in the afternoon when there are not really very many patrons on the premises and therefore not really much alcohol related harm - but at peak times. We also felt that just using observational data was far better than self reporting from licensees – more often than not the licensees are not going to tell us the truth when we are asking about serving intoxicated patrons or the frequency of checking ID. If it is clear things that you can observe and watch their behaviour then it gives you a much more realistic idea about what is going on in the premises.

Also, we wanted to incorporate regular feedback to the licensees on their performance with clear recommendations to the licensees - so not just tell them what they were or were not doing right, but give them recommendations about how they could actually change their behaviour or implement best practice. And we wanted this to be independent of enforcement action, so it is not a threat to them but rather “these are some suggestions about how you can change your behaviour.” So in terms of the observations that we undertook, all of the data was kept confidential - as much as the police and Gaming and Racing were very keen to get their hands on the data, it was kept confidential with just the research team having access to it, and the only purpose it was used for was to feedback to the licensees about what was seen on their premises.

In terms of current practices, police, Gaming and Racing and Council all use similar audits but often they have a focus on just legislative compliance, and are not necessarily linked to an educational tool. Often they exclude other factors that are linked to harm that are not necessarily legislatively based. And they do not always reflect best practice. So we found that there was an opportunity to enhance the capacity of such audit tools.

The aims of the project were to pilot and assess the potential efficacy of a responsible hospitality audit and feedback intervention in decreasing alcohol related crime associated to licensed premises and in increasing harm reduction practices undertaken by hotels and registered clubs. To do this we linked back to the other project (Wiggers and Gillham), in that we used the New South Wales police data to report alcohol related crime incidents that were linked back to licensed premises. This is using the new COPS data, where for each incident perpetrators and victims are asked about alcohol consumption and the place of consumption, and incidents that are linked to participating premises are reported back to them – this data we used for this project.

In terms of the harm reduction practices, we undertook covert observations at all the participating hotels and clubs on three occasions: June 2002, December 2002, and June 2003. We did this in one area and because it is a pilot project, you have to accept

that the numbers are quite small – we are only talking about 30 premises, so when I report the results you need to keep that in mind.

We had a team of observers that were responsible for undertaking the observations, and they were trained in the observation schedule that we asked them to use. They were also trained in the responsible service of alcohol. In terms of the observations, they occurred at peak periods, so on Friday and Saturday nights between 9pm and 3am, and wherever possible we wanted the observations teams to be at the premises at the time of closing. So they were generally on the premises from 1½ - 3 hours, depending on how long it took the premises to close and what the closing times were.

In addition, in December 2002 and June 2003, as a result of information that we gathered from the first round of observations, we realised that it would be better if one of the team members was somebody that looked young and had actually just turned 18. We were getting feedback from the licensees to say that the reason that they were not checking ID was because they knew who their patrons were, and therefore they did not need to check - they knew who their underage patrons were. So we felt if we had someone who clearly looked very young, there would be no excuse for the licensees not to check their identification or proof of age.

Also, we felt that we were not possibly gaining enough information about service to intoxicated patrons, so we got the observation teams to actually target and observe individuals that they perceived to be intoxicated. They made an assessment of an intoxicated patron on the premises, and then monitored their behaviour throughout the whole of the observation and recorded any attempts to purchase alcohol, any occasions that they were served, and also the bar staff's response to their actions.

So we did actually cover a vast array of topics in the observation schedule, which included responsible service of alcohol actions, monitoring intoxicated patrons, the checking of identification, safe transport options and many, many more, including signage, security, crowd control, physical and social environments, closing time procedures, etc. However I cannot actually report on all of those things today, I do not have enough time for that. So, the main focus of the results that I will show you are to do with responsible service actions and service to intoxicated patrons, and checking of ID.

So, in terms of the measure that we used for the harm reduction practice, it was really just the proportion of premises that were observed undertaking the recommended practices. The information that we received from the observations was fed back to the licensees. Each premises was provided with a comprehensive feedback report, which included the observation results, a rationale for each of the recommended practices, advice and recommendations for each of these, and also a resource kit that they could refer back to whenever they needed to.

In addition, we held a workshop which fed back group results so the whole Accord area had an idea about how they were performing. They could also refer back to their own performance to check out how their peers were performing in relation to themselves. The focus of that workshop was intoxication and the checking of identification, and we had a presentation by the chief police prosecutor/licensing

prosecutor who came to the workshop and made a presentation to the licensees which was very well received.

So in terms of results, we had 35 premises in the area that were able to participate. Five refused to participate, which left us with about an 86% response rate that we were quite happy with. I think probably a good thing was that we were working in collaboration with the Accord, and the Accord accepted the project and really pushed it, so I think that helped with our response rate. In terms of the results, this graph shows some changes in alcohol related crime over the time period (refers to screen). I just wanted to give you an idea as well though that, in terms of general information, reported crime in the rural area that we are talking about here increased slightly from the time period we are looking at – so from April/ July to November/ February, reported crime increased by 13%, so that is just general crime increased slightly.

In terms of alcohol related crime reported and attended to by police, that actually remained stable. So, in terms of our results here, we have shown (and again you have to keep in mind that we only had 30 premises, so the numbers are quite small) so really this is showing a trend in changes. We cannot actually make any significant conclusions from it; however, we can see that there has been a slight reduction in the proportion of alcohol related crime incidents that were linked to our participating premises. And if we break down the premises into high risk and low risk premises - those that had four or more incidents over a four-month period were classed as high risk – they actually reduced even more from 53% down to 40%.

In terms of bar staff actions to intoxication and checking of ID, we found that there really was not much of a change in responsible actions with intoxicated patrons, so the feedback has not really changed their behaviour so much in terms of service to intoxicated patrons. However, it did increase the number of bar staff checking identification – but as you can see, it is still only very low – we are only talking about a quarter of the premises checking ID at all times.

So talking a bit more about the service to intoxicated patrons, these figures are in relation to the observed intoxicated individuals, so in 80% of the premises in the first instance there were intoxicated patrons on the premises, which reduced to 62% post-test. In terms of serving, again nearly 95% of those patrons are being served. In as much as there a slight decline we are still talking about 90% of these intoxicated patrons continuing to be served, and again up to 70% of those are being served three or more times – so, little change in that but some change which is positive.

In terms of the number of times that the intoxicated patron requested service, a third of them requested service one to two times and were actually served on those occasions, and as in the previous occasion, on three or more times up to 70% actually asked for service and received service. So in fact, every time one of these intoxicated patrons went to the bar they were served – so in 100% of occasions they were served.

In terms of checking ID, as mentioned, only 12% of premises at the beginning and 13% afterwards were checking, so really no change at all which is really quite alarming as about 90% of premises are not checking their younger patrons for ID or proof of age.

So in conclusion, the results suggest that there is some reduction in alcohol related crime rates, which is a really positive thing. How much of that can be attributed to the trial – unknown. In terms of the changes in actions, it would suggest that it is not quite as positive, although there are some positive movements in some areas. Clearly there needs to be a more rigorous trial - with 30 premises it is really hard to draw any significant conclusions. Ideally we would like to do a randomised control trial, which I believe we have established funding for and will actually commence sometime this year, so we will be doing a much larger scale randomised control trial of the intervention. However, the results are consistent with previous research, which again is a promising thing, showing that there are high levels of service to intoxicated patrons, and low checking of identification – so it is a real concern, leading us to the thought that we really need to concentrate interventions in those areas.

Thank you.