

## **Evaluation of the WA drink spiking intervention in licensed premises**

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This talk today is actually on behalf of the *Western Australian Police Force*, but they could not send anyone over. We actually work very closely with them - they have a *Drug and Alcohol Harm Reduction Group*, which is separate from their enforcement group, and they work hand in hand with us - and particularly over drinks spiking, we have achieved a lot.

The background of the project was that, it was originally launched in 2002, and in fact, part of this talk was given at Club Health 2002 in Italy, when some of the original ideas and the changes that *Western Australia Police Force* were going to bring in were discussed. The idea was that this would be a bit more of a comprehensive approach to prevention of drink spiking, or, as we are really starting to call it *Drug and Alcohol Affected Events*, in terms of assaults, sexual assaults and even 'pranking'.

So we are going to look at the individuals, but this time we are targeting both women and men, and for different reasons. As you know, one of the biggest problems when it comes to health and prevention campaigns, is that they are always targeted at the victim; it is always the victim's responsibility to do something like cover the drink, not buy from friends etc. So one of the concepts of this was: "why don't we start making sure that the perpetrators know that what they are doing is a crime, and if they get caught the penalties are very severe - they are not just going to get a slap on the wrist". So the targets here have been both at women and men – and men in particular as being the potential perpetrator.

There has been a lot of work done at the environments, and again that is across the board, so looking at bar staff and security, and improving their reaction to it. Again most of you will be pretty familiar with the attitude of "they are not going to die on my premises", which means if you find someone who is looking a bit on the dodgy side, they just go straight out to the gutter so that at least it is not on the premises.

In WA we have done a lot of work making sure that does not happen, and in fact the staff are trained in first aid and basic recovery techniques, so that they can be seen more as protective and helpful at an event; and some bars actually use that as an advert now, they actually say: "Our staff are trained and therefore this is a good, safe place to be". But quite a big look at the culture that supports the crime as well, and again this is working on this business that, being intoxicated does not mean you have lost your rights, and in fact, if anything, you need more protection from society, not less. So instances of defence lawyers trying to use intoxication as a defence for the action that took place, have to be squashed. And again, we are looking hard at this business of that: it is not the substance that is malicious, it was the intent behind it, including being given doubles, triples and so on. Again, this involves educating bar staff to not allow people to order these big drinks knowing that someone is already looking intoxicated.

When it comes to law enforcement, the aspect there was to instruct people that if they want help from the police, that it is certainly available, but there is a little bit of an onus on doing it early - do it as soon as you think something is wrong; get early samples, early reports. It is impossible for police to go back to a pub even four hours after the event, because over 100-250 people will have trampled through the place by then, staff may have changed, all the glasses may have been washed, all the vomit has been cleaned up; so the earlier they know, the better. So there was an increase in emphasis to try and get people to report early. Most of this was done through putting convenience ads onto the back of doors in toilets and so on. For women it was about 'protect yourself and your friends', 'stranger danger' and 'friends are safety', 'stay in groups', 'do not become isolated' and 'if you do think some thing is happened, then report early'; for men, as you will see, it is all about: "if you are thinking about doing this, don't, because if you get caught, it will be very bad."

Good support from the liqueur industry, they helped fund some of the brochure production and then putting it into the conveniences. We then spent quite a lot of time training police and health professionals. So this is the Western Australian ad on the basis of men for drinks spiking (referring to screen) and as you can see, it basically says that drink spiking can lead to a five year relationship with a cell mate. But also, just here (referring to screen) we actually began to define consent; "silence does not equal consent." So the fact that somebody cannot say 'yes' or 'no' does not equate to consent. This is getting a little bit away from drink spiking and relating to the whole behaviour, if you get someone so drunk that they cannot say 'yes' or 'no' they have not consented, therefore anything you do from that point onwards, is without consent. And sex without consent is rape, so again, strong language, good words, and the penalty is a prison term.

(Referring to screen) Then down here, this was more "if it is not you, drink spikers could target your girlfriend, your partner, sister or friend", because again we are a bit alarmed at how many of the claims of drink spiking occur, with the most common feature being that someone was separated, they were on their own, like the little zebra in the back of the zebra pack and the big Lion pounces on them. So it is important for people to watch out for each other.

(Referring to the screen) This is the female one and again, down playing somewhat this business of "you have got to guard your drinks and put your hand over them and do not do things". It is more just a sensible reminder: "make sure that you know what is in your drink, and it is only lime", as we say. But reminding them that it is their rights, and if they feel they are spiked then they should do something early about it, see the bar staff, the police or so on, or just make sure your friends are not spiked in the first place.

Now, we wanted to find how effective it was, so we did a post interview, outside the three key bars where these had been available. This was assisted by the University of Western Australia - giving the students something to do. Basically, we found that the awareness was really quite high of the programme overall, and I know this really does not seem great but a lot of freebee TV type advertising, gets an awareness rate of ten to twelve per cent, so we were delighted to be at least a third, and the thing was it seemed to be believable information.

Interestingly, the findings revealed there was still the big focus on keeping an eye on your drink, which you can not really knock I suppose, but it was nice to see that “look out for a friends” crept up, but it is not the most common thing that springs to their mind and I am personally a bit disappointed about that; I think we should look after one another. Also amongst the messages was “Do not accept drinks from strangers”, again it is a little bit alarming that it is only about 37% who sited this message. Most people though had some idea of what to do and what they thought would be some sort of protective measure against drink spiking.

The bit that did please us was our new information and that is this business of “get them to a doctor if they are actually currently under the influence of a so called ‘drink-spiking event’”. That of course is quite important because, particularly in Western Australia, it is the only way you will get particular forensic information, so the earlier they get to a doctor the better; but also because we were becoming concerned that ‘G ‘ (GHB) was becoming available and because ‘Gs’ mode of death is through sudden collapse and apnea, we were starting to emphasis this business of getting advanced care help rather than just rolling them on the side, putting in their bedroom, and going to check on them in four hours; because of course, as you know, that is how some deaths take place.

One of the things we learned from it though, where you can perhaps save some money, is wallet-cards. One of the things for convenience was to put tiny wallet cards, sort of credit card type fold out things, with information and the bits and pieces on it. Basically, that turned out to be a waste of time. People’s purses and wallets are already so cluttered, they do not really take them and the knowledge and the ability to recall what was on them was very poor, so although they had seen the posters on the back of the toilets, they had not really bothered to take much in the way of additional information.

What did this do in terms of reporting times? Well this is the reporting times before hand (referring to screen), you have seen that if you were at my opening talk, but it just shows that we have a large number, if you add up percentages getting out past twenty-four hours, that over 50% were past twenty-four hours and because they often presented on a Monday morning, when it was a Friday or Saturday event, it is actually three days out, and this is hopeless then to re-track any form of forensic evidence, both drug toxicology and/or seen evidence.

(Referring to screen) Post the campaign, even though you have seen that some of the figures for some of the overall awareness are quite down, early presentation really went up very nicely in general, and we have been very pleased with it. Total numbers of spiking incidents, as you can see, dropped quite a lot - this is people presenting complaining of spiking and we were very concerned about this, whether somehow there had also been some influence upon people even bothering to present. But we have got contacts with ADIS - The Alcohol Drug Information Service, the poison centre and a few other phone lines; and we found that, in general, phone calls concerned had dropped down. So whether that meant some of the perpetrators or people were not ‘pranking’ anymore, because they thought they may get caught, we are not sure, but overall we are very pleased, and we are very pleased at how early people were presenting when they believed they had been spiked, and that has to be the number one object of the campaign.

So in conclusion, the most important thing we believe is to maintain the awareness of people that are going out partying and enjoying themselves, that they should undertake protective behaviours, but those behaviours should be more like 'herd mentality' than 'individual mentality': "look after your friends, stay together, do not leave friends who are in trouble alone", then general protections perhaps over "where you get your drinks from", "who you choose to take your drinks from", but improve response to incidents, because if you get improved and early presentations to police and emergency departments, we have a much better chance of trying to gather some evidence for you, and be supportive for you.

The other thing that we are starting to discuss, is this business of: "do you really understand the concept of the standard drink - how many drinks you have had and over what period of time? Because we are finding that there is an increase in explosive drinking and high alcohol content drinking. But overall we would like to catch even some of the pranksters, because 'pranking' is dangerous and it needs to be stopped and people need to know that it is not a joke, and therefore the only way you can do that is to catch some of these guys and we would like to reduce overall harm from drink spiking.

Thank you very much.