Drink or Drunk:
Why do staff at licensed premises continue to serve patrons to intoxication despite current laws and interventions?

Deborah Costello
Chief Executive Officer
Injury Control Council of Western Australia Inc.

Safety 2010 World Conference - London
22 September 2010
Injury Control Council of Western Australia (ICCWA) Inc.

- Peak non-government not-for profit organisation involved in injury prevention and community safety promotion in Western Australia
Western Australia
Our Program Areas

- Alcohol Related Harm
- Suicide Prevention
- Seniors Falls Prevention
- Professional Development Services
- Community Capacity Building
- Mall Walking Groups
- Safe Communities
- Community Violence
- Youth Safety
Australia’s drinking problem

- Alcohol is a major contributing factor of violence and injury
- Alcohol is estimated to cost the Australian economy around $15.3 billion per annum
- Single occasion alcohol use generally causes more problems than longer term alcohol dependence
- One in five Australians (20.4%) drink at short-term risky/high-risk levels at least once a month
- Licensed premises are “hot spots” for intoxication leading to aggression and violence.
Impact of alcohol in WA

- Between 1991/92 and 2000/01 - only state to indicate an overall increase in adult per capita alcohol consumption

- Number of alcohol-related assaults increased by 52% between 1990/91 to 1998/99, from 7,684, to 11,688

- 2005 - 12.5% of all alcohol related injury hospitalisations were for assault (ED presentations not included)

- Per capita consumption in 2004/05 in WA was 12.66 litres of alcohol for those over 15 years of age

- Young offenders identified the practice of serving patrons to intoxication as a major contributing factor of violence
Alcohol related crime - WA

- Alcohol - a factor in approx 70% of Police work/call outs

- During 2007-08 - alcohol was a factor in 43.2% (9810) of assaults that occurred across the state

- Perth metropolitan area in 2007-08, alcohol related assaults accounted for around 37% (5499) for all domestic and non domestic assaults

- Alcohol related crime and assaults - much higher in regional WA than the state average. Eg - in the Pilbara alone, alcohol related assaults accounted for almost 64% of all assaults
Health regions of WA

HEALTH REGIONS OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Legend
- Town
- Major Roads

WA Health Region
- Goldfields
- Great Southern
- Kimberley
- Midwest
- Pilbara
- South West
- Wheatbelt

1 cm equals 50 km

Produced by Epidemiology and GIS Branch, Dept of Health, WA, November 2006. Source data: Landgate, Div of NM.
Responsible service of alcohol in Australia

- All States and Territories have some type of responsible service of alcohol training - not all mandatory

In Western Australia -

- Responsible service of alcohol training is mandatory for all staff

- To be licensed a premise must have a house management plan which includes code of conduct detailing patron care and dealing with intoxicated patrons
Objectives of the study

- Understand the reasons why staff serve patrons to intoxication despite laws/interventions
- Identify the factors that increase/decrease the probability of staff serving patrons to intoxication
- Identify new strategies to reduce the likelihood of staff serving patrons to intoxication - in particular those relating to law enforcement
- Share outcomes to inform law enforcement, policy and planning for police and other agencies
Methodology

- Literature review, audit of RSA and previous interventions
- Consultation with key stakeholders
- Analysis of WA crime statistics
- Data collection - originally commenced October 2008
- Interviews & on-line surveys (141 viable surveys)
- Participants - 73% Female, 27% Male
- Greater Metropolitan (120) and Regional (21)
Study limitations

- Relatively small sample size given the size of WA (141 surveys) - this limited the amount of data that could be collected/analysed

- Survey method- restricted expansion of answers

- Over-representation of females in the sample (73%)

- Low survey response from regional/country areas (13%)
Survey questions

• Who or what has had the biggest influence on whether you served patrons to intoxication or who were already intoxicated?

• In your experience, why do bar staff serve patrons to intoxication or to patrons who are already intoxicated?

• In your experience, what leads bar staff to refuse service to someone who is intoxicated?

• In your experience, did your supervisor support your choice to refuse service? Please explain.

• In your experience, did your co-workers support your choice to refuse service? Please explain.
What previous research has found

- Managerial
- Economic reasons
- Personal characteristics of staff including their own drinking habits
- Little to no perceived threat of civil liability or legal action
- Lack of server training
- Lack of ability to identify intoxication
- Fear of confrontation from patrons
- Act of deviance
Previous interventions - key factors

- Support from management in adhering to responsible service
- Stronger disincentives for not serving responsibly
- Effective liquor enforcement - Specialised Police & other bodies
- Economic incentives for positive change
- Use of positive media
- Awareness of gender relations and social norms towards alcohol
- Licensees to be knowledgeable and motivated enough to change
Where to from here?

- Publish the findings and recommendations of this research in the very near future and will distribute as widely as possible.

- Address the culture of drinking and the role alcohol plays in Australian society.

- Combination of evidence based strategies addressing alcohol consumption - education, enforcement, advertising, access, trading hours etc.

- Specific strategies targeted at licensed venues - many factors at play in serving alcohol to intoxication.

- Safer Bars WA Trial - expansion across WA.
Contact us

Injury Control Council of Western Australia Inc
City West Lotteries House
2 Delhi St
West Perth WA 6005
+61 8 9420 7212

iccwa@iccwa.org.au or
dcostello@iccwa.org.au

www.iccwa.org.au