

## **The Australian Heritage Hotel**

Violent behaviour is an undercurrent in the Australian society, the issue of domestic violence is at large in society and this unsavoury behaviour unfortunately also can also displays in public life, like when people socialise in hotels and clubs. It is unfair to link violence to alcohol in a public environment, violence is a result of psychological issues or violent tendencies that needs to be addressed at a greater level.

Everyone that consumes alcohol is over 18 years of age, they are adults and in charge of their own behaviour. It is unrealistic to ask that every hotel operator be 100% responsible for the behaviour of all adults on their premises. Operators do everything to reduce risk – but there is inherent risk when you mix social groups and patrons with existing (unknown) undesirable social behaviour. They would have violent tendencies before consuming an alcoholic beverage – how many beverages do they need to consume for the blame to be placed on the alcohol as the cause?

The repercussion for the violent offender is not a harsh enough deterrent – they are in the wrong, they have committed the crime and hurt another, why does the consequence of their behaviour result in a strike for the hotel?

It is unfair that we can get a strike for one random violent, quarrelsome event on our premises – fair enough if there is a history of violent, quarrelsome events on the premises – but human nature is unpredictable, even when you do everything to sensibly reduce risk, it still can happen.

Why if there is a violent incident on the premises should that result in a strike and restrictions on your license that have no relation to the violent act, that reduce the enjoyment of the hospitality experience for complying patrons such as plastic drinking vessels, early closing hours, no cocktails – all are associated with premium hospitality offerings.

The policing of antisocial behaviour in hotels is a huge strain on government resources, would it not be better to direct expenditure on more pressing social issues such as domestic violence, homelessness, health, education, mental health, illegal drug use – that are the likely causes of the antisocial behaviour undercurrent in society.

We are reliant on outsourced security personnel, who charge high hourly fees, paying penalty rates, often with guards that struggle to converse politely and constructively with patrons about licensing issues and instructions. Yet we are “responsible” for them, even though they are not our direct employees, they have their own management, license and regulations.

Everyone makes mistakes, its human behaviour – how do you account for personal judgement of intoxication versus mental issues, or physical disability that could be judged as intoxication and cause huge offence.

How can you police every single conversation in a public environment, what people say to others that could cause great offence that makes them flick a switch and throw a coward punch – how can we foresee that happening?

We are a world class city with a bed time curfew, it is embarrassing that international and interstate visitors to our beautiful city cannot enjoy true Sydney late night hospitality – only at the casino – is that really Australian culture we want to promote?

Paris Ballantyne | Licensee - The Australian Heritage Hotel