

# Drunks a threat to bar staff

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NIGHTCLUB bar staff say they are caught between a rock and a hard place when serving alcohol to drunk clubbers.

Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union assistant secretary Michael De Bremmi said despite training in the responsible service of alcohol (RSA), most bar staff disregarded intoxication levels of customers because if they cut off their drinking they stood to lose their hours from 'profit-hungry' club owners or face physical violence from the drinkers.

Bartender Ryan Roach recently told a parliamentary hearing into alcohol-related violence that he had lost count of how much 'blood I'd seen spilt' from bartenders being attacked by drunken revellers who had been cut off.

"We are threatened, abused and quite frequently assaulted by patrons who feel they have been unfairly judged by the staff enforcing the RSA," he told the hearing.

"I personally have been punched, headbutted, and threatened to the point of fearing walking out to my car after close.

"Bartenders do not get paid enough to have our lives put at risk by enforcing government legislation without anything to back us up."

The union is also calling for actively monitored CCTV footage in surfers clubs, more liquor licensing officers to enforce responsible service of alcohol and more backing from club owners for their staff to refuse service to drunk patrons.

The call comes after another violent incident in Surfers Paradise on Saturday night when a 20-year-old man was arrested in a large alcohol-fuelled street brawl in which two police officers were injured.

Mr De Bremmi said nightclub staff had reported losing shifts because they cut into club owner's profits by refusing to serve intoxicated people.

## Possible solutions

- Put more liquor licensing officials on the beat late at night to enforce responsible service of alcohol
- Increase CCTV footage and actively monitor existing systems so that altercations can be responded to as they happen
- Give staff more power in legislation to refuse service to intoxicated people – similar to recent tough laws passed in SA
- Increase the number of crowd controllers
- Cut all glass out of any licensed venue in the nightclub precincts
- More training for staff in the responsible service of alcohol
- Tougher penalties for those who assault paramedics and hospitality staff

"They are supplying a drug. I can't think of any other person serving a drug that only has to have a three-hour training course in the responsible service of alcohol," he said.

"The training doesn't equip them with the skills to say no or how to say no.

"If people don't get too drunk, they are less likely to become violent but bar staff often find themselves without their hours if they refuse service – it's the profit-motive of club owners."

The revelations come as Gold Coast City Council knocked back a funding request from Broadbeach Alliance for more security.

Gold Coast Tourism CEO Martin Winter criticised the move, saying security needed to be taken more seriously because many revellers headed to Broadbeach from Surfers.

Fair Trading Minister Peter Lawlor said the Government was reviewing the recommendations of the alcohol-related violence inquiry but did not think more liquor licensing officials needed to be on the beat.