

Opening the flood gates:

An analysis of Queensland liquor licensing applications after the lifting of the late night trading moratorium



July 2015

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About the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education

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FARE is guided by the World Health Organization's *Global Strategy to Reduce the Harmful Use of Alcohol** for stopping alcohol harms through population-based strategies, problem directed policies, and direct interventions.

If you would like to contribute to FARE's important work, call us on (02) 6122 8600 or email info@fare.org.au.

* World Health Organization (2010). *Global strategy to reduce the harmful use of alcohol*. Geneva: World Health Organization.

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Summary

A moratorium on late night trading applications by on-premise licensed venues was introduced in September 2009 by the Queensland Government. For the duration of the moratorium, no liquor licensing applications for extended trading hours between 12am and 5am were assessed.¹ This moratorium was lifted on 1 September 2014 allowing for late night applications to be made.

This analysis examines the impact of the moratorium being lifted on liquor licensing applications for late trading in Queensland in the six month period between 1 September 2014 and 28 February 2015.

The analysis found that in the six months following the lifting of the moratorium on late trading in Queensland, 107 applications were made for late trading beyond 12am. Of these, 40 applications were approved and 67 were still awaiting a decision at 28 February 2015.

The types of venues seeking to increase their trading hours varied, with the majority of applications from: Commercial Hotels (73), Community Clubs (22), Commercial other (11) and Adult Entertainment (1). Venues sought an average of 12.07 hours of extended trading per week. Applicants sought a total of 1,292 extra hours per week. Over a year, this equates to 67,184 hours.

The majority of venues sought to trade to 3am (68), followed by 30 venues applying to trade to 2am, seven venues to 5am and one venue each for 1am and 4am.

Venues seeking to extend their late night trading hours were distributed across Queensland's metropolitan and rural centres with the highest proportion of venues applying to extend their hours located in Brisbane (35 per cent) and the Gold Coast (15 per cent). Both of these areas are Safe Night Out precincts.

While it is too early to determine the long-term impact of lifting the moratorium will have on alcohol-related assaults in and around licensed venues within the areas where late night trading has been extended, the evidence clearly shows that an increase in late night trading is associated with an increase in harms. Research shows that alcohol-related assaults occur most frequently between midnight and 3am on Saturday nights² and for every additional hour of trading there is a 16 per cent increase in assaults.³

This analysis demonstrates the immediate impacts of lifting the moratorium on late night trading in Queensland. This is evident in the increased availability of alcohol as a result of the 109 applications to extend trading hours within the first six months of the moratorium being lifted. Of particular concern are the additional late night trading hours sought by 107 licensed venues.

Introduction

A moratorium on late night trading applications by licensed venues was introduced in September 2009 by the Queensland Government. The moratorium applied to licences where alcohol was sold for consumption on the premises. Packaged liquor licences, which allow licensees to sell alcohol for consumption off the premises, were not affected.

For the duration of the moratorium, no applications for extended trading hours between 12am and 5am were assessed by the Commissioner for Liquor and Gaming. The moratorium applied to all new and existing applications for extended trading hours before the Queensland Office of Liquor Gaming Regulation (OLGR) unless they were in an extended trading hours precinct.⁴

The moratorium was originally in place for 12 months pending the outcome of the *Inquiry into alcohol-related violence* by the Law Justice and Safety Committee. The Inquiry handed down its report in March 2010. In response to the Inquiry's report, the Bligh Government extended the moratorium to December 2013 and introduced a trial of 'Drink Safe Precincts'.

Drink Safe Precincts were high-volume entertainment areas that employed place-based management practices to reduce alcohol-related violence and improve community safety and public amenity.⁵ Local committees and management plans were introduced to improve communication and problem-solving between key stakeholders including state and local government, licensees, venue managers, security providers, taxi and other transport providers and support services.

In 2012, the Newman Government appointed a panel of industry, community and government representatives to review the state's liquor and gaming laws as part of the government's election promise to reduce the red tape burden within the tourism industry. The Liquor and Gaming Red Tape Reduction Expert Panel recommended that the moratorium be lifted, the 3am lockout removed and late night trading hours wound back to 3am across the state.⁶

The Newman Government responded by inviting comments from the community. The Newman Government then announced the *Safe Night Out Strategy* (the Strategy) in March 2014. This Strategy was implemented in June 2014 and included lifting the moratorium and the establishment of 'Safe Night Precincts' in 15 locations across Queensland. Safe Night Precincts are an extension of the Drink Safe Precincts and include local boards which operate as incorporated associations. The Strategy did not include winding back late night trading hours to a 3am close.

The moratorium on late night trading was lifted on 1 September 2014 amidst strong opposition from the public health sector who were concerned about the impact that increased trading hours would have on the health and safety of the community.

This report examines the changes in late night trading in Queensland following the lifting of the moratorium.

Approach

The Queensland OLGR provided data on applications to extend the trading hours of licensed venues between 1 September 2014 and 28 February 2015. This timeframe was chosen because this was the first six month period of the moratorium being lifted. The data included the following information:

- name and location of the establishment
- date of the application
- type of licence and type of venue
- current trading hours, and
- the time that the application was seeking to trade until.

Information was also provided on the current status of the application, including whether it was:

- approved
- refused, or
- still under consideration (pending).

For the purposes of this analysis, extended hours were included as late night trading hours where applicants sought to extend their hours from a closing time before 12am to a closing time after 12am.

For example, if an applicant sought to extend their trading hours from a 10pm close to a 2am close, the analysis treated all four hours as late night trading hours.

The analysis only focused on the normal trading hours of venues. Where venues had licence approval to trade additional hours on particular public holidays or for special events, these hours were not included in the calculations of changes to trading hours arising from the application to extend trading hours.

The analysis did not include applications for early extended trading, as these applications were not affected by the moratorium.

The following questions were answered as part of this analysis:

1. How many applications were made for late trading in the six month period following the lifting of the moratorium?
2. What types of venues applied for late trading during the six month period following the lifting of the moratorium?
3. How many hours of extended trading were requested during the six month period following the lifting of the moratorium?
4. Where were the venues that sought to increase their late night trading during the six month period following the lifting of the moratorium located?

Findings

Number of applications

There was a total of 109 applications made to the Queensland OLGR to extend trading hours between 1 September 2014 and 28 February 2015. Two venues did not seek to extend their hours beyond 12am and therefore did not fit within the scope of this review.

The analysis concentrated on the remaining 107 applications to extend trading hours after 12am. Of these, 40 applications were approved and 67 were still awaiting a decision as at 28 February 2015. No applications had been rejected.

Table 1. Number of applications to extend late night trading hours.

Status of application	No. of applications	% of applications
Approved	40	37
Pending	67	63
Rejected	0	0
<i>Total</i>	<i>107</i>	<i>100</i>

Type of venue

The types of venues applying for extended trading hours varied with Commercial Hotels making up the majority of the applications (73). Commercial Hotels are defined as a hotel or tavern with seating capacity for more than 60 patrons. They must also have a commercial kitchen and at least two of either a dining facility (restaurant or bistro style), self-contained accommodation (of at least three rooms for paying guests) and/or a function room facility available for hire by members of the public.

Other venues applying for extended trading in Queensland included Community Clubs (22), Commercial other (11) and Adult Entertainment (1). Community Club licences refer to non-proprietary clubs such as sporting clubs, Returned Services League (RSL) clubs and social clubs.

There are five types of Commercial other licences, of which two are relevant to this analysis. These are:

- Subsidiary on-premise licence – this licence applies to businesses that sell alcohol for on-premise consumption but it is not the main function of the business. It includes business such as restaurants, nightclubs,ⁱⁱ cafes, motels, theatres etc.
- Bar licence – this licence applies to premises that sell alcohol for on-premise consumption as the main function of the business and the premises seats no more than 60 patrons.

The remaining types of Commercial other licences are Subsidiary off-premise licence, Industrial canteen licence and Producer/wholesale licence.⁷ Adult Entertainment permits are needed for venues that wish to provide sexually explicit entertainment on licensed premises.

Table 2. Status of late night trading applications by licence type.

Licence type	Venue type	Approved (no.)	Pending (no.)	Total (no.)
Commercial Hotel	Hotel	15	32	47
	Tavern	5	21	26
Community Club	Sporting, RSL, social	13	9	22
Commercial other	Nightclub	2	4	6
	Bar	3	0	3
	Restaurant	2	0	2
Adult Entertainment	Adult entertainment	0	1	1
<i>Total</i>	<i>All venues</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>67</i>	<i>107</i>

Hours of extended trading requested

The number of extra hours of trading sought by individual licensed venues ranged from two hours per week to 21 hours per week.ⁱⁱⁱ The average extension being sought from venues was 12.07 hours. At 28 February 2015, 491 extra late night trading hours per week had been approved and the remaining 801 hours were pending.

In total, there were 1,292 extra hours sought per week. Over a year, this equates to 67,184 hours. Of these trading hours, 25,532 hours of additional trading had been approved by 28 February 2015.

Venues typically sought to extend trading hours until 3am with 68 venues seeking to trade until this time. At 28 February 2015, 22 venues had been approved to trade until 3am, while 46 applications were still pending. One venue, whose application was approved, sought to trade until 1 am. Eight venues sought to trade beyond 3am, with one venue applying to extend trading until 4am and the other seven applying to extend trading until 5am. The application to extend trading hours to 4am was approved and the applications to trade until 5am were pending at 28 February 2015.

ⁱⁱ Note that a new nightclub licence will replace the previous 'commercial other' subsidiary on-premises licence (with the principal activity of entertainment) from 1 July 2015 – <https://www.business.qld.gov.au/industry/liquor-gaming/liquor/subscribe-newsletter/current>

ⁱⁱⁱ Some venues sought to extend early morning trading hours in addition to late night trading however this analysis has focused on late night trading hours. When looking at the total number of extended hours being sought (morning and night), the number of hours ranged from two hours to 42 hours (at 1 venue).

Table 3. Time that late night trading applications sought to trade until.

Time to trade to	Approved (no.)	Pending (no.)	Total (no.)	Total (%)
1am	1	0	1	1
2am	15	15	30	28
3am	22	46	68	64
4am	1	0	1	1
5am	0	7	7	7
<i>Total</i>	39	68	107	100

Hours of extended trading requested by venue type

Commercial Hotels and Community Clubs sought the greatest number of increased hours of late night trading among all types of licences. Commercial Hotels sought 820 additional hours per week of late night trading, of which 214 additional hours were approved by 28 February 2015 and 606 hours were pending.

Community Clubs, such as services, leagues, bowling and social clubs, applied to extend late night trading hours by 314 hours per week. Of these, 192 hours had been approved by 28 February 2015 and 122 were pending.

Taverns sought to increase their trading hours by the most number of hours on average per venue, with 50 venues seeking an additional 315 hours per week. By comparison, 192 Community Clubs sought to increase their trading hours by 314 hours. This is nearly four times the number of venues for approximately the same number of hours.

Table 4. Extra hours of late trading sought by licence type.

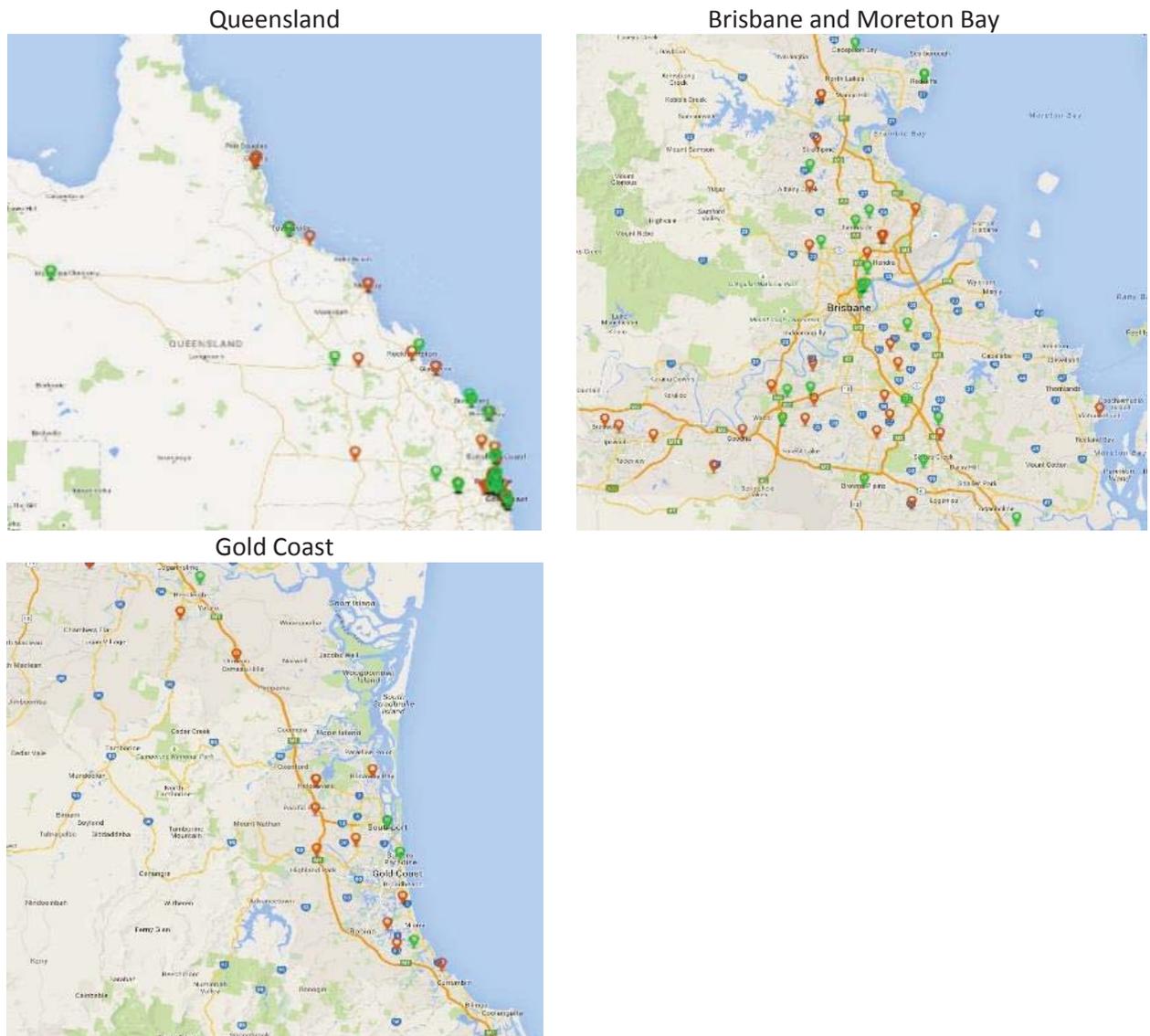
Licence type	Venue type	Approved (hrs.)	Pending (hrs.)	Total (hrs.)
Commercial Hotel	Hotel	164	341	505
	Tavern	50	265	315
Community Club	Sporting, RSL, social	192	122	314
Commercial other	Nightclub	42	61	103
	Bar	25	0	25
	Restaurant	18	0	18
Adult Entertainment	Adult entertainment	0	12	12
<i>Total</i>	<i>All venues</i>	491	801	1292

Location of venues seeking to extend late night trading

Venues seeking to extend their late night trading hours were distributed across Queensland's metropolitan and rural centres with half (50 per cent) of these venues located in the Brisbane and Gold Coast region and half (50 per cent) in Queensland's rural and regional locations. The highest proportion of applications received were from venues located in Brisbane (35 per cent) and the Gold Coast (15 per cent).

The maps below show the distribution of venues applying to increase their late night trading hours across Queensland. The green flags represent venues whose applications were approved by 28 February 2015 and the red flags represent applications pending.

Figure 1. Distribution of venues seeking to extend late night trading hours in Queensland, Brisbane and Moreton Bay, and the Gold Coast.



Details on the spread of venues seeking to extend late night trading hours across Local Government Areas (LGAs) are found in Table Five.

Table 5. Location of venues seeking to extend their late-night trading hours, by local government area.

Local government area	Approved (no)	Pending (no.)	Total (no.)	Total (%)
Brisbane	16	21	37	35
Bundaberg	3	0	3	3
Burdekin	0	1	1	1
Cairns	1	4	5	5
Central Highlands	1	1	2	2
Fraser Coast	1	2	3	3
Gladstone	0	2	2	2
Gold Coast	3	13	16	15
Gympie	0	1	1	1
Ipswich	0	5	5	5
Logan	1	1	2	2
Mackay	0	3	3	3
Maranoa	0	1	1	1
Moreton Bay	2	3	5	5
Mount Isa	3	0	3	3
Redland	0	1	1	1
Rockhampton	1	1	2	2
Sunshine Coast	2	4	6	6
Toowoomba	4	2	6	6
Townsville	1	1	2	2
Western Downs	1	0	1	1
<i>Total</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>67</i>	<i>107</i>	<i>100</i>

Case studies

Four case studies are provided below to demonstrate the types of venues seeking to extend their trading hours and to understand the increase in the number of hours.

Case Study 1: Full Moon Bar and Restaurant

The Full Moon Bar and Restaurant is a restaurant located in Fortitude Valley. Fortitude Valley is a suburb of in Brisbane and is one of Queensland's 15 Safe Night Precincts.

The application by the Full Moon Bar and Restaurant was approved to extend late trading hours from 12am to 2am seven days a week. This has resulted in an extra 14 hours of trading per week.

Case study 2: Club Southport Inc

Club Southport Inc (CSI) is a Community Club located in Southport on Queensland's Gold Coast.⁸ The CSI has a number of bars, live entertainment and gaming facilities.

The application by CSI was approved to extend trading hours from 12am to 3am, seven days a week. This has resulted in an extra 21 hours of trading per week.

Case study 3: Carina Leagues Club

Carina Leagues Club is a sporting club located in the Brisbane Local Government Area (LGA). The Carina Leagues Club offers food, beverage, entertainment and gaming and betting facilities.⁹

The application by Carina Leagues Club was approved to extend early trading hours from 7am to 10am and late night trading hours from 12am to 3am, seven days a week. This has resulted in an extra 42 hours of trading per week.

For the purposes of this analysis, only the extension to late night trading hours was included, which resulted in an extra 21 hours of trading per week.

Case study 4: Lonestar Tavern

The Lonestar Tavern is a Commercial Hotel located at Mermaid Waters on the Gold Coast. It has a restaurant, two bars and gaming and function facilities.¹⁰ It is co-located with the Quality Hotel Mermaid Waters and has a bottle shop attached.

The application by Lonestar Tavern to extend late trading hours by one hour on Thursday to Saturday from 2am to 3am and by three hours on Sunday to Wednesday from 12am to 3am was still pending at 28 February 2015. The application for late night trading does not apply to the attached packaged liquor outlet. If this application is approved, it will result in an extra 15 hours of late night trading per week.

Discussion and conclusion

This analysis demonstrates the immediate impacts of lifting the moratorium on late night trading in Queensland. Even though the number of venues seeking to increase late night trading hours in the six month period represented just 1.5 per cent^{iv} of all licensed venues in the state, these applications led to a significant increase in the total number of late night trading hours and more approvals will further increase total trading hours.

The average number of late night trading hours sought by each licensed venues was 12 hours per week, resulting in a total of 1,292 hours of extra trading hours being sought per week. Over a year, this equates to 67,184 hours.

The majority of the 107 applications seeking to trade after midnight or extend their late night trading hours came from Commercial Hotels and Community Clubs such as sporting and RSL clubs, with over two thirds of venues applying to trade to 3am.

The location of these venues seeking to trade beyond midnight were distributed throughout Queensland, however a high proportion of applications emanated from the busiest entertainment districts of Brisbane and the Gold Coast. This is a concern as both these areas are within Safe Night Out precincts that require extra controls and policies for licensed venues to prevent and deal with alcohol-related violence.

Research shows that increased availability is associated with an increase in harms. Temporally, an increase in trading hours is associated with an increase in rates of violence and road crashes.^{11,12} Spatially, an increase in the density of alcohol outlets is also associated with an increase in harms such

^{iv} Based on 7088 operational liquor licences at 26 September 2014

as assaults^{13,14,15} including family violence,¹⁶ alcohol use disorders¹⁷ and increased risk of alcohol consumption for early adolescents aged 12-14 years.¹⁸

While it is too early to determine what the long-term impact of lifting the moratorium has had on alcohol-related assaults in and around licensed venues and the areas where late night trading has been extended, the evidence clearly shows that an increase in late night trading is associated with an increase in harms.

A study by the New South Wales (NSW) Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR) shows that an increase in late night trading hours is associated with a significant increase in alcohol-related assaults.^{19,20} NSW police reported alcohol-related assaults most frequently on a Saturday between midnight and 3am, where alcohol-related assaults accounted for 55.3 per cent of all assaults.²¹ Research internationally has also shown that for every additional hour of trading, there is a 16 per cent increase in assaults.²²

In early 2014 the then Labor Opposition released its alcohol policy, *Tackling alcohol fuelled violence*.²³ This policy sought to reduce alcohol-related violence in and around licensed premises in Queensland by introducing measures such as 3am last drinks and 1am lockout. Upon winning the election, the Palaszczuk Government announced that it would proceed with its commitment to introduce the 3am last drinks and 1am lockout, citing the evidence of their effectiveness and community support for the measures.²⁴

This analysis demonstrates the importance of liquor licensing authorities relying on moratoriums or freezes as a measure to control the availability of alcohol and to prevent the associated harms with late night trading.

In NSW, a freeze on new liquor licenses and extending trading hours for existing licenses is in place in Kings Cross and the Sydney CBD. This freeze has been in place since June 2009 and is due to expire in February 2016. Along with this freeze, the NSW Government has also introduced trading hour restrictions to further prevent alcohol harms.

The modest trading hour restrictions in NSW were introduced in February 2014 and included 3am last drinks and 1.30am lockout provisions on venues located within Kings Cross and the newly established Sydney CBD Entertainment Precinct. In less than 12 months, these measures have resulted in a 32 per cent reduction in non-domestic assaults in Kings Cross and a 26 per cent reduction in the Sydney CBD Entertainment Precinct.²⁵

In Victoria, a moratorium or freeze on applications to trade past 1am has been in place in the Melbourne CBD since 2008. In June 2015 the Victorian Government terminated the freeze and lifted the moratorium to allow venues with a capacity of 200 patrons to apply to trade past 1am.

Moratoriums or freezes are a crude instrument that governments use from time-to-time to restrict the availability of alcohol. The reverse is true.

As demonstrated by this analysis, the lifting of the moratorium on late night trading in Queensland quickly resulted in the increased availability of alcohol across the state. This analysis shows governments need to have recourse to more sustainable ways to manage the availability of alcohol than resorting to freezes or moratoriums. This will require being better informed about the evidence, being clear about the policy objective (reducing harm) and being more responsive to evidence of rising alcohol-related harm in particular localities.

The moratorium on late night trading should be reintroduced in Queensland to prevent further harm from occurring while the Queensland Government legislates the 3am last drinks and 1am lockout measures outlined in its alcohol policy. In light of the evidence of the highest risk of harm occurring after midnight, governments should also be examining the broader issue of the need to provide extended trading permits for the sale of alcohol.

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ISBN 978-0-9943476-4-0