

23 April 2008

## MEDIA RELEASE

### NSW AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT

#### **Working with hotels and clubs to reduce alcohol-related crime NSW Police Force and the Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing**

"Excluding domestic violence incidents, the number of alcohol-related assaults has almost doubled over the last ten years from 10,305 in 1997-98 to 20,475 in 2006-07" said Peter Achterstraat.

"Almost a third of these occur on licensed premises such as hotels and clubs."

"The increase in alcohol-related crime is disturbing. However we found that the number of alcohol-related assaults had reduced or stabilised in 11 of 81 police commands over the last two years".

The NSW Police Force and the Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing have a role to play in reducing alcohol-related crime on or near licensed premises. One way to do this is to stop people from reaching high levels of intoxication. To help achieve this pubs and clubs must serve alcohol responsibly.

A balance between education and enforcement is most likely to help licensees comply with responsible service of alcohol laws and reduce drunken behaviour. This means supporting licensees to serve alcohol responsibly, then taking appropriate action when offences occur.

"We found that both Police and the Office of Liquor Gaming and Racing work with pubs and clubs to promote and enforce responsible service of alcohol laws" said Mr Peter Achterstraat. "However Police tend to rely more on enforcement rather than preventing breaches from occurring."

"One of the key problems the audit identified was inconsistencies in how each agency dealt with offences. For example, one licensing officer might take a licensee to court for a practice that another issued a warning for."

It is only in recent years that Police and the Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing have focused on reducing intoxication. This includes taking action against licensees.

We have recommended a joint approach to licensing, better guidance on working with licensees, and better public reporting on action taken against problem pubs and clubs.

"Patrons also need to be educated about responsible drinking and their obligations under the liquor laws" Mr Achterstraat said. "Patron education campaigns have been run in some regions, but more is needed statewide."

Both agencies support our recommendations and have projects underway to address many of the issues raised in our report.

#### **Further Information**

Please contact Barry Underwood, Executive Officer on 9275 7220 or 0403 073664.