

GLASSING ASSAULTS — GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

743. Mrs L.M. HARVEY to the Minister for Racing and Gaming:

Thank you, Mr Speaker. It is great to be back.

Glassing assaults at licensed premises have been a problem and certainly a topic —

Mr M.P. Murray: He'll win the next race by a short nose, by the look of him.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Is the member done? Minister, glassing assaults at licensed premises has been an issue that has been raised in this Parliament in recent times. I know the minister has been working quite closely with the liquor industry about this type of behaviour.

Mr P.B. Watson interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Albany!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Can the minister update the house on his progress with this issue?

Mr T.K. WALDRON replied:

I thank the member for Scarborough for the question. It is great to see her back in Parliament. Member for Collie–Preston, I guess that when it comes to noses, at least mine is going to improve!

This is a serious issue. Obviously I am fully aware, as is everyone here, of the glassing assaults that happen in Western Australia. It is a serious issue that we have always been very concerned with.

I just want to give a little bit of history. I am on the record as saying that I do not believe that mandating non-glass drinking containers across the board is a practical way forward. The reason for that is there are so many other potential weapons on licensed premises that are available and have been used; for example, barstools, dinner plates, knives, forks, stiletto shoes, stubbies and recently a hammer was used. The impact and enjoyment of all Western Australians and visitors to our state should not be impaired by the deplorable criminal acts of a few undesirable people. However, this does not mean that as a government we have ignored the issue—quite to the contrary. I will talk about the Australian Hotels Association in a moment.

Some other things we have done that have helped to address this—I will give members some results in a minute —

Mr M.P. Murray interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Collie–Preston!

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Prohibition orders have been quite successful in this area. They are routinely imposed on anyone committing a serious glassing assault. Currently, just to let members know, of the 117 prohibition orders issued to date, 51 of those have been in response to glassing assaults, so we are dealing with it through prohibition orders.

The Director of Liquor Licensing is also able to place conditions on the use of glassware or non-glassware in hotels. That can be seen mainly at football stadiums et cetera. We have been following individual licensed premises closely and there is not actually a pattern emerging at certain premises; it is sporadic. If a pattern emerges, I am sure that the director will take action. Another thing that has been very successful is barring notices. They provide police with a really quick response to deal with the lower level area of antisocial behaviour. I am really confident that that is actually saving people getting to that next stage, which is what barring notices are all about. It is not just a punitive measure; it is a measure to stop youngsters who might do something silly on one night out from going further. The barring notices have been a great success up north recently. It is interesting to note that the courts have imposed prison terms on males and females who have committed serious assaults involving glassing, so some people have gone to jail.

Members talked about the AHA. Let me tell members something. I have engaged with the liquor industry —

An opposition member interjected.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Yes, I have, and as I should, to try to embrace a safer entertainment environment.

Mr M.P. Murray: You're in their pocket; that's what I'm saying.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Yes, I have heard that I am in their pocket. I have made a lot of decisions since I have been minister that the member might find the AHA does not agree with too much.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Collie–Preston and member for Albany, I would like to be able to hear the answer and I would like both members to stop interjecting for a while.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: I will just go through what is happening at the moment. The member for Collie–Preston talked about me and the liquor industry. Maybe he needs to engage with the industry a bit more, maybe he needs to know what the glassware suppliers are doing and maybe he needs to talk to the licensed venues, because he puts out press releases but he does not talk to the industry. I just wonder whether he actually speaks to anyone in the industry.

I have been making inquiries and working closely with the industry and the glassware suppliers. I am happy to tell the member for Scarborough, who has a real interest in this and not just a pretend interest, and the member for Collie–Preston, that the Australian Hotels Association and the industry has informed me that since the joint government and AHA initiative—yes, we worked with it to try to get across this problem and to encourage licensees to take up safer glassware alternatives—glassware suppliers now report that 75 per cent of the sales of beer and spirit glasses are tempered glass. It is happening. By working with industry, rather than having a big fight, we are getting the result that the opposition has been talking about. I emphasise that it is 75 per cent of sales. I will not take too much time, but as a good example, the Hyde Park Hotel, one of the bigger hotels, uses 95 per cent tempered glassware. What results does that lead to? That is what we need to know.

We would not like to see any glassings. It is a hideous crime and even though this voluntary program that we are running with the industry is in its early days, it has been reported to me that the number of prohibition orders issued in response to glassing assaults is now starting to slow for the first time in ages. We are having an effect. I am optimistic that if the government continues to work with the hotel and nightclub industry and the police, we will show positive results over the next couple of years. I believe that we need a pragmatic and sensible approach to what is a resinous problem. We will continue to work with, rather than against, industry to bring about the real changes that will give more protection to our public.