

**EDUCATION AND HEALTH
STANDING COMMITTEE**

**INQUIRY INTO THE ADEQUACY AND APPROPRIATENESS OF
PREVENTION AND TREATMENT SERVICES FOR ALCOHOL AND
ILLCIT DRUG PROBLEMS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE
TAKEN AT PERTH
MONDAY, 30 AUGUST 2010**

Members

**Dr J.M. Woollard (Chairman)
Mr P. Abetz (Deputy Chairman)
Ms L.L. Baker
Mr P.B. Watson
Mr I.C. Blayney**

Hearing commenced at 3.58 pm

PEIRSON-JONES, MR MARTIN
Kimberley Accommodation Pty Ltd,
examined:

The CHAIRMAN: On behalf of the Education and Health Standing Committee, I thank you for your interest and appearance before us today. The purpose of this hearing is to assist the committee in gathering evidence on prevention and treatment services for alcohol and illicit drug problems in Western Australia. You have been provided with a copy of the committee's specific terms of reference. This committee is a committee of the Legislative Assembly. This is a formal procedure of Parliament and therefore commands the same respect given to proceedings in the house. Even though the committee is not asking you to provide evidence on oath or affirmation, it is important you understand that any deliberate misleading of the committee may be regarded as a contempt of Parliament. This is a public hearing and Hansard will make a transcript of the proceedings for the public record. If you refer to any document or documents during your evidence, it will assist *Hansard* if you could provide the full title for the record.

Have you completed the "Details of Witness" form?

Mr Peirson-Jones: Yes, I have.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you understand the notes at the bottom of the form about giving evidence to a parliamentary committee?

Mr Peirson-Jones: I do.

The CHAIRMAN: Did you receive and read the information for witnesses briefing sheet provided with the "Details of Witness" form today?

Mr Peirson-Jones: I did.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you have any questions in relation to being a witness at today's hearing?

Mr Peirson-Jones: No.

The CHAIRMAN: Would you please state the capacity in which you appear before the committee today.

Mr Peirson-Jones: I am here in my capacity as a Kimberley businessman.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you. When we arrived in the Kimberley we heard that you were interested in catching up with the committee but we were unable to organise a time when you and I were in the same place at the same time. We might first invite to you discuss from your perspective how you see this inquiry fitting in with your role in the Kimberley and what is happening. After your submission, and possibly during, if it is acceptable to you, the committee may interject with any questions we have.

Mr Peirson-Jones: Certainly. As a long-time resident and business person in the Kimberley, I also am concerned about alcohol abuse. I come from the industry side of the debate. Over the years, I have been quite critical of the Department of Racing, Gaming and Liquor, and government's approach to the issues. I think, fundamentally, the problem is too much money. It is a welfare system. You have people who are welfare dependent and have little incentive to work. Welfare is handed out with no strings attached. People talk about lack of work opportunity and employment opportunity in the north. There is no lack of it. In some towns or certain locations there probably is,

but, by and large, there is not. Substance abuse has become a way of life for too many people. It is not good.

Mr P. ABETZ: That is an understatement.

Mr Peirson-Jones: I am involved in the hotel–hospitality industry, and I do not like it either.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you think that, over the past 10 years, the social impact of alcohol, particularly alcohol—we are looking at alcohol and drugs as part of this inquiry—given your background, has got worse or better over the past 10 years?

Mr Peirson-Jones: It probably has continued, as it has for the past 40 years, to get worse. In places such as Fitzroy Crossing and Halls Creek we now have virtual prohibition on full-strength and mid-strength alcohol. That is after, in Halls Creek's instance, the best part of 20 years of various forms of restrictions. Nobody has done anything about the funding these people have got—the excess or surplus funds—that allow them to squander it on drugs and alcohol and gambling.

Mr P. ABETZ: What are your thoughts on the BasicsCard? Is that being implemented in a significant way? I think it is voluntary at the moment is it not?

Mr Peirson-Jones: It is only voluntary. The last time I spoke to someone from Centrelink, I think they were quite surprised at the number of people who had taken it up. But I think the people who have taken it up are the ones who are not the problem people. They are the grandmothers and grandpas who are sick of being robbed of their cash by the spendthrifts, the drunkards and the layabouts. Aboriginal people find it very hard to refuse their relations. “If I've got money in my pocket, I'm obliged to share it.” The best way not to do it, if you have the opportunity, is to get onto the BasicsCard, and, “If somebody wants to hassle me for a packet of wheatbix, good luck.”

The CHAIRMAN: Do you think the restrictions in the Kimberley townships have had a positive effect?

Mr Peirson-Jones: To a degree they have. But they have shifted a lot of people. The problem people have moved. They have increased problems in Kununurra and Broome with the restrictions in Halls Creek and Fitzroy. It is widely known. Sometimes it is not openly accepted by various government agencies that all they have done is shift the problem.

Mr P. ABETZ: The police suggested to us that a small number of people have moved. They use the term “opportunistic” and say that a lot of the Aboriginal people are opportunistic drinkers in the sense that if it is not there—it is not that they are addicted in the sense of having to have it every day, but if it is there they go for it until it is all gone. The more addicted people have gone to Broome or Kununurra but for the large proportion of people it has made a huge difference. What are your observations?

Mr Peirson-Jones: I would agree with that, but not about a huge difference. Some people are happy enough to drink low-strength beer. They are not drinking to get drunk, but I question whether it has made a significant difference. I think to some people it has. I agree, a lot of them are opportunistic. People in a lot of the outlying communities such as in Balgo, save up until they have \$1 000 or whatever it is. They do a trip into town, get on the booze for a couple of weeks, blow their money and go home. Then they are on the dry until they have saved up another bank or there is another reason to go to town or another funeral in Fitzroy or whatever.

The CHAIRMAN: How do you think the broader community in the Kimberley view the restrictions?

Mr Peirson-Jones: The majority of people are opposed to them; they do not like them. They find them divisive. The people who work, whether they are coloured or white, do not like the restrictions because they see their rights, for want of a better word, to be able to purchase a bottle of chardonnay or other wine or a carton of beer the same as people in the city or anywhere else. They think they should have the same entitlement.

The CHAIRMAN: Would you agree that there is a problem with the abuse of alcohol, but particularly in the Kimberley area, it is Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal in terms of the amount of alcohol that is drunk?

Mr P. ABETZ: A problem do you mean?

The CHAIRMAN: Yes?

Mr Peirson-Jones: I suppose the obvious side of the problem is the Aboriginal—coloured side of it. The amount of alcohol that is consumed—I suppose I do not know on what basis; is that permanent residents, does it take into account tourists, visitors, fly in, fly out workers? I do not know. You have seen the statistics but I do not know on what basis they are made.

The CHAIRMAN: We were informed that in some of the hotels—I think this is very different from the hotels in the metropolitan area—the till turnover in one hour could be \$20 000 to \$27 000 per till.

[4.09 pm]

Mr Peirson-Jones: I think that would be virtually impossible.

The CHAIRMAN: So at a peak period, a holiday, what do you think the maximum till turnover would be?

Mr Peirson-Jones: The average —

The CHAIRMAN: Not the average. I am talking about peak.

Mr Peirson-Jones: Okay. On a very busy Friday night, there would be bars in the Kimberley that might take \$25 000 in a whole bar, which might have five tills or something. That would be a Friday night with a band and hundreds of people.

The CHAIRMAN: So that is one bar, not one till?

Mr Peirson-Jones: That might be on a big night, over five or six hours.

The CHAIRMAN: Sorry. So \$25 000 an hour for the hotel over a night, rather than for a till?

Mr Peirson-Jones: The whole night, yes.

The CHAIRMAN: So \$25 000 for the whole night per pub, not one till?

Mr Peirson-Jones: Yes.

Mr P. ABETZ: In your experience of having run hotels in the Kimberley for a long time, what measures would you suggest as a way of dealing with the problem drinkers? Obviously not everybody is a problem drinker, but there is a proportion that are and that are creating all the social problems.

Mr Peirson-Jones: Well, under the act, we do not have the ability to ban somebody from the premises unless they are a known troublemaker—a convicted troublemaker—and they have caused issues on the premises. If somebody comes in and they are a known alcoholic, and this person is destroying himself, unless he is drunk, we cannot refuse to serve him.

Mr P. ABETZ: That is interesting.

Mr Peirson-Jones: I think under the definition, alcoholism is a medical condition. If a woman walks in, I might know that she has got children at home and she is spending all her money on grog, but I have got no right to refuse her service unless she is drunk or a known troublemaker.

The CHAIRMAN: Have you discussed with the director general your views on what should happen with people such as the ones you have just described, in terms of what new restrictions should be put in place for that scenario, and also what other measures do you think could be introduced in the Kimberley to try to at least plateau, if not turn the tide?

Mr Peirson-Jones: Again, we need to try to identify the problem people, and that may be through an ID card system, but that will require the cooperation of the welfare agencies and the police, and they do not seem to be willing to do it.

The CHAIRMAN: That is Centrelink, and we can look at what Centrelink does. But what else can be done? We are particularly interested from your perspective in terms of hotels and bars. What suggestions have you put forward maybe to the director general that you believe would help prevent some of the problems that arise from people coming in and drinking too much in licensed premises?

Mr Peirson-Jones: Well, again, being able to identify the problem people and refuse them entry without breaking the law.

Mr P. ABETZ: Because you would be in trouble with the law if you refused to serve somebody?

Mr Peirson-Jones: We are then accused of being racist—"You can't do this; I've got my rights"—and, in all honesty, we cannot.

The CHAIRMAN: So this is why you mentioned in the email that you sent to the committee an alcohol entitlement card. Would you like to elaborate on that for committee members? Basically, who would have to carry the card, and in what areas would the card apply?

Mr Peirson-Jones: Really, it could be done in a town or across the region, so that in order to buy takeaway alcohol, you would need an ID card. It is a simple database. If somebody has got a red flag on them, they are prohibited from buying takeaway alcohol, and they are not served; or it could be done in such a way that the person is limited to mid-strength alcohol only, or whatever. So, everybody carries the card. The majority of non-Aboriginal people have no real problem with it. They have got to have a licence to drive a car, and they have got to have a licence for their boat, their gun or their dog, or whatever. So they would prefer just to have to show an ID card or their driver's licence, or whatever it is, when they want to buy takeaway alcohol. They do not have a problem with that. It is far better having to provide that than not being able to purchase it full stop.

Mr P. ABETZ: Would it be fair to say that in the pubs themselves, obviously with the responsible service of alcohol if somebody gets too drunk they do not get served anymore, so the real excessive drinking happens through takeaway alcohol; so if we could restrict the sale of takeaway alcohol, that would pretty much take care of at least a significant portion of the excessive drinkers? Have I got the right picture there?

Mr Peirson-Jones: Yes, it would. To purchase alcohol in a bar is roughly three times more expensive than takeaway. So if you are pushing drinkers back onto the premises, at least by definition they are not allowed to be drunk. It is a regulated environment; it is a far more sociable aspect; there are toilets; there are no juveniles; there is no violence. It is much better.

The CHAIRMAN: What about people buying alcohol for other people? We heard when we were in the Kimberley that in some places taxi drivers would pick people up and the alcohol would be charged on their cards because they were not allowed to —

Mr P. ABETZ: Which card is that?

Ms L.L. BAKER: Was that when they were ordering alcohol from Derby to be delivered to their community? Is that what you are talking about?

Mr P. ABETZ: It was when they faxed through the money order to the bottle shop, and then somebody went there with a big van or a LandCruiser and they would pick it up from the bottle shop and they would come back with a LandCruiser full of alcohol for other people.

Mr Peirson-Jones: Well, it probably happens. But, again, somebody can subscribe to Cellarmasters and buy 10 cartons of chardonnay, in cask form probably, and have it delivered through Australia Post.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you think an alcohol entitlement card would stop that, because people could still buy alcohol for other people? I guess at least it would cut down on the amount of alcohol being sold, which might help. Is that what you are saying?

Mr Peirson-Jones: It would. If the police or somebody identified that you do not have a card and you are not entitled to buy alcohol, but another person is buying it for you, then that person would lose his card. So, sooner or later people are going to wake up that if they supply alcohol for a party in the house, and the police are called, then because they are the person who has bought the alcohol, they will lose their card. So, eventually it will spread. People will not keep abusing it.

Mr P. ABETZ: Because if you buy for others, in a sense you are reselling? Is it that kind of thing? It is a bit borderline, but that would be a basis on which they could —

Mr Peirson-Jones: It becomes hard when you have got cattle stations and the like and somebody says, “Can you get me a carton of beer when you go into town”, because people then say, “Why can they do it and I cannot?” So, again, if somebody is on the prohibited list, even if they do order it by fax or something like that, if that person has got a red mark against him and he is not entitled to it, he will not get supplied.

The CHAIRMAN: Martin, we are aware of the fact that you are also senior vice president of the AHA WA. So you would probably know through your association with the AHA that this type of alcohol entitlement card has been tried in the Northern Territory and Alice Springs and was not very successful.

Mr P. ABETZ: What was the problem there? Was it lack of enforcement?

The CHAIRMAN: I am just going to ask Martin, because he would have heard.

Mr Peirson-Jones: I have visited Katherine and Arnhem Land and I have spoken to the people over there. They believe that it worked. Again, there were instances of people having false cards. Some of the people in community offices and things were printing entitlement cards for their mates and stuff like that. But they are all things that can be addressed. Nothing is perfect. My experience in Halls Creek is that after 20 years of trying various restrictions on the type of product available and the hours for which it is available, really, at the end of the day, after nearly 20 years, the only solution is no takeaways.

[4.19 pm]

The CHAIRMAN: In either your personal capacity or in your professional capacity as senior vice president have you put this idea to the Director of Liquor Licensing, Barry Sargeant, or the Minister for Racing and Gaming, and what was their response?

Mr Peirson-Jones: It is not within their jurisdiction to do it because it requires an act of Parliament, and it is up to the Department of Justice to do it. They passed the buck.

The CHAIRMAN: They said it was up to the Department of Justice?

Mr Peirson-Jones: Yes. Nobody seems to want to go with it. We have offered to partially fund it. I had a system for the east Kimberley costed by a company in Sydney. I think it was \$20 000 or something. The software and everything is available. It all exists.

The CHAIRMAN: If you then prepared a proposal in relation to this, would you be happy to provide that to the committee by way of supplementary information?

Mr Peirson-Jones: Yes, certainly.

The CHAIRMAN: It would be interesting to look through that. I was shocked and horrified on my visit to the Kimberley hearing about young mothers lying in the gutter with one-month-old babies and seeing small children walking the streets at 10.00 pm—the night we went out it was not that late—hearing about children walking the streets because of the effects of alcohol at home on those children in terms of physical and sexual abuse. I certainly have nothing but admiration for the

people working there trying to help in this area with the alcohol problems. How are you preparing your staff to deal with people who have these problems? You have several premises throughout the Kimberley, do you not?

Mr Peirson-Jones: Again, we do not have the ability under current legislation to refuse service to anyone unless they are drunk or a known troublesome or disorderly person. I do not want to serve them, but what do I do? We are accused of being racist; people become violent. If they walk up to the bar, are sober, have money and wish to purchase alcohol they cannot be refused, despite the fact that we have an idea of the potential harm that is causing.

The CHAIRMAN: Are you saying that all the people who are drunk on the streets have bought their liquor from liquor outlets and not from any of your hotels?

Mr Peirson-Jones: No. They bought it from liquor outlets, but they buy takeaway alcohol and go and sit under a tree in the park, on the edge of the mangroves in Broome or wherever it is; they consume and become drunk. It is messy, untidy—the whole lot. It is unsupervised; they are giving it to children and pregnant women. We cannot control that.

Mr P. ABETZ: The key issue is not the pubs; it is the bottle shop takeaway alcohol. If we could control that, would we overcome 80 per cent of the problem probably?

Mr Peirson-Jones: With what has happened in Halls Creek and Fitzroy, nobody can buy it. It develops into a black market or whatever, or the problem person shifts. If it became a right that they could lose, that might add some responsibility to it. Quarantining the cash—if they cannot buy alcohol, it is drugs. Unless they want to help themselves, who helps them? If they move towns, they are even harder to help because suddenly there is an influx of people in Kununurra, Broome, Derby or wherever and then they are not known to the welfare people, so they are even harder to help.

Mr P. ABETZ: From what I am hearing you say, in a sense it seems to me that the BasicsCard ought to be compulsory for those who have an alcohol issue.

Mr Peirson-Jones: Or everyone.

Mr P. ABETZ: So, we should quarantine a certain amount of funding.

Mr Peirson-Jones: Take away the cash.

The CHAIRMAN: When we were in the Kimberley, we heard how the police pick up people or people are picked up by the night patrol and taken to the sober-up shelters—again we have nothing but admiration for the staff there—given a good breakfast the next morning, have their breakfast and then queue up waiting for the hotels to open at 12 o'clock.

Mr Peirson-Jones: Or the bottle shops?

The CHAIRMAN: Or the hotels. At one place it was a hotel. It was suggested they open a bit later. I believe the police were informed that their licence could allow them to open up even earlier. I cannot remember which one it was. I do not know whether that was one of yours or which one it was. It seems that there is a cycle of alcohol. From what I have seen and heard up there, the restrictions helped many, many families—children and women. From my summation of visiting the Kimberley I think the restrictions have had a wonderful effect in giving some people time out from the terrible effects of alcohol. We have to look fully. How have the existing bans affected your business?

Mr Peirson-Jones: They have not.

The CHAIRMAN: One of the things that was put to us as members was that it takes quite a while to get these bans introduced area by area. Certainly there are some sectors of government working up there in the Kimberley who believe that, rather than introducing bans town by town, there should be a ban across the Kimberley.

Mr P. ABETZ: Restrictions.

The CHAIRMAN: When I have been talking about this I have been meaning restrictions. The restrictions have had such a positive effect that they should be Kimberley wide. What do you think of that concept?

Mr Peirson-Jones: I think it would be most unpopular. If you told the tourist in Broome they could buy only low-strength beer, there would be hell to pay.

Mr P. ABETZ: In the pub they could drink normal beer but they could not buy any takeaways, is that right?

Mr Peirson-Jones: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: I had been unaware that, with the situation in the Kimberley, we had a third world country on our doorstep, with some of the things that I saw and the stories I heard in the Kimberley. We saw the reporting, particularly on Fitzroy Crossing. The *West* did a wonderful job with that reporting a few years ago, before restrictions were imposed. I thought, given that was a few years ago, things would have improved. But the stories we heard were horrific. They were stories of young women and the problems with foetal alcohol syndrome. You said that people do not want those restrictions, but most people that I know of care about other people and would like this vicious cycle stopped. What other way is there, other than having Kimberley-wide restrictions—you suggested that card—to protect both the children there now and the children of the future from the problems of this alcohol abuse that, as you have said, has been going on and getting steadily worse over the past 40 years? Something major has to be done.

[4.30 pm]

Mr Peirson-Jones: The two things that have not been tried are quarantining money, and giving licensees the means to identify people who should not be sold alcohol. Those are really the two things that have not been tried in the Kimberley.

Mr P. ABETZ: They would be fairly simple things to implement. From what you are saying, the technology for the card system is fairly straightforward, so that could be done at a minimal cost. For the quarantining of money, there is already a system in place with the BasicsCard, where if the local doctor, or some other person who is qualified, identifies a person as having an alcohol problem, that person would then be able to take steps for that person to be on a BasicsCard.

Mr Peirson-Jones: Or it could apply to everybody who is on welfare—not just the problem people, but everybody—because somehow welfare has become not a privilege or a benefit, but a right.

Mr P. ABETZ: Which is the wrong emphasis.

Mr Peirson-Jones: Which to me is the wrong emphasis, yes. Where is the responsibility or anything to go with it?

The CHAIRMAN: So are you saying that at the moment you are not able to ban people from your Halls Creek hotel?

Mr Peirson-Jones: Yes, we are, but only the known troublemakers, or somebody who is intoxicated or has a criminal record or something like that. If somebody comes in and they are sober and they wish to purchase alcohol, they are able to.

The CHAIRMAN: How many people would you have banned from your Halls Creek hotel in the last 12 months?

Mr Peirson-Jones: Troublemakers and things—probably a couple of dozen.

The CHAIRMAN: So a couple of dozen over the last 12 months?

Mr Peirson-Jones: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: What about your view of the voluntary alcohol accords in the Kimberley?

Mr Peirson-Jones: Some of the things that have been done through the accords have been beneficial. I think everybody in the Kimberley would agree that there is a good working relationship between the police and the publicans as far as dealing with sporting events, funerals and things like that.

The CHAIRMAN: What were the beneficial ones that you just spoke about?

Mr Peirson-Jones: Years ago, port was sold in glass flagons, which is just rocket fuel, and that was gotten rid of; and some of the other things, like selling shooters and things like that on premises, and advertising alcohol and things like that.

The CHAIRMAN: The majority of people can fortunately enjoy a drink and know when to stop. However, there are some people who are not able to have a drink and know when to stop. Advertising does play a major role in encouraging people to drink. There are many countries now, particularly within Europe, that have banned alcohol advertisements. What to you think about banning alcohol advertisements in the Kimberley? Would you be supportive of such a move?

Mr Peirson-Jones: I would have no problem with that at all.

The CHAIRMAN: Now I will ask you the same question wearing your other hat, if you could just swap your hat for a moment, because I believe there are many, many people like yourself who would be involved with the AHA who realise that we have a problem. So, wearing your AHA hat, would you support a ban on the advertising of alcohol?

Mr Peirson-Jones: Yes, I would.

Mr P. ABETZ: Statewide or just in the Kimberley?

The CHAIRMAN: Particularly the Kimberley, but I think it would probably need to be statewide, because we also have the problems down south and in other regions. We have problems in Northbridge. In Perth itself we have areas where there are serious problems. So you would be supportive of that?

Mr Peirson-Jones: Yes, I would.

The CHAIRMAN: We will be inviting you back again! I might be inviting you back on a regular basis! I will hand over to Lisa.

Ms L.L. BAKER: I think you have covered most of the questions that I was thinking about. I suppose the most important thing for me to find out from you is what would be the initiative that you would see as a priority? If there was one intervention that you could make in the business that you run, what would it be if you were not covered by legalities?

Mr Peirson-Jones: Across the board, it would be quarantining welfare, thus removing the cash, because that would also affect the drug issue.

Mr P. ABETZ: That is good point.

Ms L.L. BAKER: Thanks, Martin.

Mr Peirson-Jones: And the gambling and everything else that goes with it. A lot of the violence comes from that. If somebody has got money, somebody else wants it.

The CHAIRMAN: And the gambling and the cannabis, which are both big problems up north. Before I hand over to Peter, have you had the opportunity, either in your personal capacity or in your professional capacity—not that your other capacity is not professional, but in either your business capacity, or wearing your AHA hat—of looking at what the minister has put on the table in Parliament as proposed amendments to the Liquor Control Act; and, if so, what is your opinion on those amendments?

Mr Peirson-Jones: No, I have not seen them.

The CHAIRMAN: We will try to forward a copy of those to you, and you might like to get back to us with your comments.

Mr Peirson-Jones: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: What about lobbying? It is quite refreshing to get your opinion on advertising, because one of the things that the AHA has as part of its charter is to oppose any political body that wants to—how is it worded?

Mr P. ABETZ: Impose limitations or restrictions on the industry.

The CHAIRMAN: Yes, on the industry.

Mr Peirson-Jones: Well, I suppose most industries would feel that they do not want that. But strictly from a hotelier's point of view, the majority of the takeaway alcohol, which is what causes a lot of the problems, like the one that we see in the paper today, with the police having to be called in, in riot gear, to break up parties and things like that, is cheap discounted alcohol from the bottle shops, and they are the majors—the Coles and Woolworths and things like that—with the big ads of three bottles of this for \$70 or whatever it is.

The CHAIRMAN: So would you support putting a minimum price on alcohol? We know that in the United Kingdom a lot of the hotels are going out of business because of the price of alcohol through the supermarkets and other places. I am asking you that question in both your business capacity and in wearing your AHA hat.

Mr Peirson-Jones: I would agree with that under both circumstances. I think that a lot of the alcohol issue with young people in particular is that if they want to have a big night out and get drunk, they will buy as much alcohol as they can, and they will look for whatever is the cheapest, whether it is vodka that is on special, or rum or whatever. So, if you lift the price, you would probably reduce the volume that is going out.

The CHAIRMAN: So that is your response wearing both hats?

Mr Peirson-Jones: Yes.

Mr P. ABETZ: Takeaway alcohol seems to me to be the key issue that we need to address.

The CHAIRMAN: One of the issues.

Mr P. ABETZ: Yes. In terms of particularly the Kimberly situation and quarantining the money, that is a straightforward thing. Would you be supportive of limiting the amount of alcohol for the tourists that are coming through? They probably do not need to buy 10 cartons of beer. They most probably want to buy a bottle of wine or one carton of beer to stock up their caravan or whatever. What about preventing people from some of the remote communities from coming into town and taking out LandCruisers full of grog? Do you think there should be a restriction, such as that a sale cannot be more than one carton of beer, or whatever, at a time? Do you think a limitation on quantity would work? What would be some of the obstacles to that approach?

[4.40 pm]

Mr Peirson-Jones: I think that does work. It is also a problem in towns that have multiple outlets. You can put a carton limit on it per person, per sale—you have three takeaway outlets in a town or whatever and staff change. That could be built into an ID system.

The CHAIRMAN: You also have the rent-a-crowd then who jump into the truck or car that goes to get the alcohol. We heard that type of system has been introduced in some places, but then you have rent-a-crowd when people go and purchase the alcohol.

Mr P. ABETZ: Whatever system you have, people always find ways around the system. But if it reduces the overall impact, it is worth doing, is it not?

Mr Peirson-Jones: It is back to the card. Someone with a card will buy for other people, but if what they are doing is discovered, it is a matter of, sorry they have lost their card too for three or six months or whatever. Eventually it will reduce that volume going out. In some towns it could be that if you did have the card system you suddenly might find there are hundreds of people with a red flag.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you see this as a separate identity card or could it go on people's driving licences?

Mr Peirson-Jones: Just a driver's licence or something.

The CHAIRMAN: Before I close, Martin, is there anything that you were expecting us to ask or that you wanted to put on the record that we have not discussed today?

Mr Peirson-Jones: The only thing I get upset about at times is that, as a licensee, publican or owner of hotels, we are painted as the bad people in all this. We supply a substance that is lawful; it is legal. We do our level best to trade within the act.

The CHAIRMAN: It is a drug, but it is legal; you are right.

Mr Peirson-Jones: The vast majority of licensees trade responsibly. There is no way in the world we ever want to serve juveniles. It happens; we go to court and we get fined. In the vast majority of cases, it is never deliberate; it is never deliberate negligence or because we do not care. The industry does care. A lot of times we are painted, particularly by people such as *The West*, in a pretty bad light. There are problems but we want to be part of solving the problems. A lot of times that just does not happen. We are painted as the bad people; we are the suppliers; we are the drug runners sort of thing. That is not where we want to be at all. We are in the hospitality industry, which is where people can enjoy themselves and enjoy the comradeship of going into a licensed premises and being able to purchase alcohol to take home to consume responsibly. That is where we want. We do not want to be involved in the rest of this. But how do we not be?

Mr P. ABETZ: Would you say that the drinking problems have damaged the hospitality industry in the Kimberley?

Mr Peirson-Jones: Probably not. Fitzroy Crossing is probably an example. You have been to Fitzroy?

Mr P. ABETZ: Yes?

Mr Peirson-Jones: They have had God only knows what issues at the lodge in Fitzroy. Since the restrictions came in people have been drinking on the premises. That property was never built as a local pub, which it has turned into almost. That has caused real issues. In Halls Creek the restrictions are an inconvenience to the tourists. In effect, now, you have to drive 1 100 kilometres from Kununurra to Derby to buy take-away alcohol.

Mr P. ABETZ: When the grey nomads, who do the trip every couple of years, came through recently, they said that the difference in Halls Creek and Fitzroy Crossing was like chalk and cheese. They would never stop there before because they did not feel safe. Whereas now they feel safer because they feel that the whole town has changed.

Mr Peirson-Jones: I do not think so.

The CHAIRMAN: Having visited Fitzroy several times in the past, and having listened to and met people up there, I was amazed at the transformation of the town. They had nothing but praise for particularly what the Aboriginal women have managed to achieve. I think many Aboriginal women in the community have been abused for many years but are now following the fine example set by the women in Fitzroy. I hope that that, along with other changes we might be able to come up with, will help turn the tide.

I thank you very much for your evidence before the committee today. As you said yourself, things have got worse over the past 30 years and we need a whole culture change when it comes to alcohol. I really appreciate the support that, from your comments, you would obviously give them on a ban on advertising. I think that might go a long way towards improving the problems with binge drinking and antisocial behaviour related to alcohol.

A transcript of this hearing will be forwarded to you for correction of minor errors. Any such corrections must be made and the transcript returned within 10 days from the date of the letter attached to the transcript. If the transcript is not returned within this period, it will be deemed to be correct. New material cannot be added with these corrections and the sense of your evidence should not be altered. However, should you wish to provide additional information or elaborate on particular points, please include a supplementary submission for the committee's consideration when you return your transcript of evidence.

I am not sure whether we will have the time but we will look further into your suggestion about the card and find out whether it comes under the Minister for Racing and Gaming or the Attorney General. Thank you.

Hearing concluded at 4.46 pm