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E-alert: Queensland Liquor Update – What do the major parties have in store for the industry?

By ,

With the Queensland State election being held on 25 November, the major parties have now released the detail of the policies that they would implement if in government. Below is a brief summary of the parties' positions on the liquor/hospitality industry. (NB the parties have released a myriad of policies which if implemented would directly and indirectly affect the industry – for example industrial relations reform. The below summary purely relates to their announced policies that are directly targeted at liquor/hospitality).

Queensland Labor

Labor, apparently content with their recently enacted ID scanning and other safe night reforms, has not released any direct policy. Rather, their '2017 Policy Platform' is past-focused and states '*Labor has implemented laws and enforcement strategies to reduce the rate and toll of alcohol-fuelled violence in Queensland communities.'*

Liberal National Party

In contrast, the LNP propose reform, advising that '*Alcohol and drug-related violence needs a comprehensive plan, not a one-size-fits-all nanny state approach that punishes the majority for the sins of a few…' What works in Cairns and Toowoomba doesn't necessarily work in Brisbane or on the Gold Coast.'*

Specifically:

a. The LNP promises a '*no lockout law guarantee*.' Beyond making that statement, the LNP have not published their precise proposal on lockouts, but presumably it means exactly what it says – no lockouts – of any nature – will be implemented. For example, in their current term Labor had proposed a 1am lockout in Safe Night Precincts (located in the State's major urban centres) but scrapped the proposal before commencement based on feedback/evidence as to its likely effect.
b. The LNP will '*close the current loophole that exists for ID scanners, by requiring venues that trade after midnight to commence scanning patrons at midnight, rather than 10pm.*' This refers to the current regime implemented by Labor whereby many premises in Safe Night Precincts are required to scan IDs on entry if they are authorised to trade on a permanent basis after midnight. Where Premises are authorised to trade until midnight but not after midnight, they do not need to scan. Therefore, a situation exists whereby neighbouring premises have to operate differently at 10pm – premises 'A' is authorised to trade after midnight (whether or not they elect to do so) and therefore must scan at 10pm but premises 'B' is authorised to trade until midnight only so does not have to scan at 10pm. Instead of this potential discrepancy, the LNP proposes that ID scanning not commence until midnight so that premises which trade beyond midnight and those that do not, are on an equal footing.
c. The LNP does not propose to change the existing trading hours regime, '*because industry needs policy certainty and stability.*' Therefore, ordinary trading hours will remain ordinary trading hours will remain as 10am to 12 midnight (10pm for bottle shops).
d. The LNP advises that '*unlike Labor who made retrospective changes without any proper consultation, we will go back to what had been in place for many years and had been working well.*' This refers to Labor's changes in 2017 where the number of one-off permits for trading until 5am was reduced from 12 to 6 per

year for premises in a safe night precinct. Further, Labor had permitted the use of these permits to ‘*special events*’ to be defined by a criteria approved by the Government, rather than 5am trading being ‘*business as usual*’. It seems the LNP will remove this annual reduction and limiting criterion.

Should you wish to discuss any matters arising out of this article, please contact the author:

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