Mandatory Networked ID Scanners in Nightlife Precincts Across Queensland, Australia: Key Stakeholder Perspectives on Policy and Practice

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Abstract

This study explored stakeholder experiences and attitudes regarding the use of ID scanners in licensed venues in Queensland, Australia. In July 2017, the Queensland Government introduced mandatory, networked ID scanners in licensed venues within designated nightlife districts (SNPs). After 10pm, people seeking to enter late-night licensed venues must provide identification, which is verified by the scanner. The scanner also checks whether the patron has any recorded banning notice/s that may preclude entry into the venue. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 66 key stakeholders and analysed using thematic analysis. Stakeholders reported that ID scanners support the enforcement of patron bans. Their mandated use within SNPs allows for accurate and timely identification of patrons, and may offer benefits with respect to reducing and solving crime, and improving patron behaviours. Some concerns were expressed regarding data privacy and the need to ensure procedural fairness and consistent use. Overall, the study highlighted the importance of ongoing monitoring and refining of ID scanner policy, particularly with respect to where and when scanners are used.

Keywords: ID scanners; nightlife; alcohol-related disorder; patron banning; displacement.

Introduction

The night-time economy is seen as an important part of the social and cultural make-up of most modern cities (Ferris et al. 2021; Puljević et al. 2021). However, the associated geographical positioning of high-density alcohol outlets, such as bars and clubs, can result in alcohol-related health, crime and social problems (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007; Buss, Abdu and Walker 1995; Chikritzhs et al. 1999; Collins and Lapsley 2008). Globally, alcohol has been identified as a factor in about three-quarters of assaults and offensive behaviour on the street (Buss, Abdu and Walker 1995). In an attempt to tackle disorderly and violent behaviour resulting from alcohol and other drug use, the use of point-of-entry identification (ID) scanners in the Australian night-time economy has been increasing. In response to high rates of violence in the night-time economy and two high-profile deaths, the Queensland Government introduced the Tackling Alcohol-Fuelled Violence (TAFV) policy, which included the introduction of mandatory, networked ID scanners on the doors of every venue operating after midnight in Safe Night Precincts (SNPs) across the state. This paper reports the findings of interviews with a range of stakeholders in Queensland to examine the perceived benefits and limitations of the introduction of mandatory, networked ID scanners, as well as issues around privacy and safety.

ID Scanners, Surveillance and Enforcement in Nightlife Settings

Measures to address problematic behaviours in and around entertainment districts and specific licensed premises include a range of surveillance and enforcement mechanisms, such as the proximity of police officers, visible closed-circuit television (CCTV) or the use of ID scanners to identify patrons as they enter individual venues. Each has the potential to influence behaviours, but the precise effects are variable and far from conclusive (Ariel, Bland and Sutherland 2017; de Andrade, Coomber et al. 2021; de Andrade, Puljević et al. 2021; Piza et al. 2019). Nightlife crime typically involves impulsivity, sometimes in response to provocation and almost always when those involved are intoxicated (Fleming 2008; Graham and Homel 2008; Hadfield, Lister and Traynor 2009; Hughes et al. 2008; Mawby 2017; McNamara and Quilter 2015; Miller et al. 2015). The premise of deterrence, which provides a core rationale for the use of ID scanners and measures such as patron banning, arguably denies or ignores fundamental determinants of most nightlife crime and undermines a key source of revenue for the venues from which individuals can be removed and excluded.

ID scanners are popular in licensed venues across Australia, and a wide range of venues have been using them since 2007 (Coomber et al. 2021; de Andrade, Coomber et al. 2021; de Andrade, Puljević et al. 2021; Miller et al. 2016; Palmer et al. 2011). The TAFV policy was based on the successful 'Newcastle intervention' which, from 2008, required venues in the New South Wales city to close at 3.30 am. In Newcastle, these measures resulted in steady reductions in assaults and emergency department presentations over time (Kypri, McElduff and Miller 2014; Miller et al. 2012). However, fidelity to the Newcastle intervention remains poor, in part due to some licensed venues remaining open (but not serving alcohol) after 3.30 am (Miller et al. 2019; Miller et al. 2021). One element of the Newcastle nightlife response that has received little attention in the published literature was the 2012 introduction of networked ID scanners. This initiative was well received by the nightlife industry in Newcastle at the time (The Shout Team 2013).

When attempting to gain entry to a venue that uses an ID scanner, patrons are required to present a valid form of ID (typically a driver's licence or passport). The scanner can check and verify the validity of the ID, confirm the patron's age, collate a record of who is entering the venue and at what time, and may retain an image of the patron (policies regarding image retention vary). This process supports proactive and immediate monitoring of patrons within venues and can assist with the identification of individuals should an incident occur (de Andrade, Coomber et al. 2021; de Andrade, Puljević et al. 2021; Miller et al. 2012, 2016; Palmer, Warren and Miller 2011).

ID scanners can also detect patrons who have been banned from entering licensed venues by matching the scanned patron ID documents against a database of banned patrons—either specific to the venue or, where available, networked across multiple venues (Miller et al. 2019). Some jurisdictions, such as New South Wales, have implemented an integrated ID scanner network that links through to the relevant police databases and can be updated almost immediately to ensure an accurate record of banned patrons and report attempted breaches of bans. For venues operating without ID scanners, the verification of patrons and the identification of those who have been banned is much more unreliable. For the latter, venues rely on key personnel who may know or recognise people who have been banned. While benefits associated with the use of ID scanners have been identified, questions remain about their role in promoting social order and increasing perceived levels of community and individual safety (Miller et al. 2012; Palmer, Warren and Miller 2011).

Patron Banning

In Queensland, ID scanners are used in conjunction with patron-banning provisions, as a key requirement for the successful implementation of any banning policy is the timely and accurate identification of individuals who have been banned. Banning orders can be issued in Queensland by a venue, police and/or the courts and typically exclude recipients from some or all venues

within a given locality for a fixed period of time (Farmer, Curtis and Miller 2018; Farmer and Clifford 2023). The banning of patrons from licensed premises and/or wider public areas (e.g., nightlife entertainment precincts) is generally presumed to change the behaviours of recipients, deter non-recipients from engaging in disorderly behaviour (Curtis et al. 2018, 2022), increase and ensure public safety, and prevent crime.

Police officers are primarily responsible for the 'on the ground' enforcement of banning provisions, but this relies on the proactive support of licensees, venue managers and their security personnel to identify banned patrons and, where appropriate, to alert police to potential breaches of bans. Referred to as 'third-party policing' and reflecting changing expectations regarding public safety, this approach aligns with situational crime prevention approaches (Cherney 2008; Mazerolle and Ransley 2002; Mazerolle, Higginson and Eggins 2016). Police leverage the presence and proximity of venue staff to help to identify banned, or otherwise troublesome, patrons. The move for police to work through partners has accelerated due to trends in governance, the increasing scope of government regulation and the expectation that communities will help co-produce public safety (Williams, Brower and Klay 2016). Third-party policing of patron bans requires access to photographs and other personal details to identify banned patrons, and technological solutions increasingly help with enforcement. ID scanners can improve the efficiency and accuracy of identifying patrons and also enable venues to understand from where a patron may have been banned and, in the case of venue-issued bans, decide whether to override the ban.

The expectation that a patron ban will change behaviours draws upon a presumption of rational decision-making on the part of those who have been or may be banned and effective enforcement of the ban itself. While the former sits outside the scope of this paper, for the latter, measures to manage problematic behaviours in and around licensed premises include surveillance and other operational considerations, such as the proximity of police officers, visible CCTV or the use of ID scanners to identify patrons as they enter venues. Each has the potential to influence behaviours and to enhance the effectiveness of patron bans.

Privacy Concerns

Privacy concerns were identified in the early literature regarding the use of ID scanners within licensed venues (Palmer, Warren and Miller 2011, 2014), particularly with respect to the security of individual data used to identify patrons. In a study of ID scanner use in the Victorian city of Geelong, Palmer, Warren and Miller (2011) interviewed licensees, door staff and local police. They found that most respondents understood the importance of privacy, but it was universally considered of secondary importance when compared to the overriding concern of combating violence and antisocial behaviour. While patrons were not included in these detailed Geelong stakeholder interviews, this study did include a patron interview component conducted inside venues whereby patrons identified ID scanners as the most effective intervention in the region (Miller et al. 2012). Privacy law requirements across Australian jurisdictions limit the capacity of state and federal public sector agencies and the private sector to gather, use, store and disseminate personal information. In a report to the 2009 Queensland Legislative Assembly Law and Justice Safety Committee (QLALJSC), the Queensland Information Commissioner noted that:

> An important issue raised with a system of networked ID scanners relates to privacy, in particular the collection and storage of this sensitive information. The committee recognizes that the safety of patrons and the protection of their identity documents are paramount. These issues need to be closely considered before any recommendation can be made on this matter. (QLALJSC 2009: 8)

Prior to the implementation of the TAFV policy, the Queensland Government consulted to ensure that the proposed ID scanners met the requirements of Australia's *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) (Business Queensland 2022a). The Queensland Government sought guidance from the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC), which has a number of safeguards and complaint procedures in place (OAIC 2019). Guideline 64 of Queensland's liquor regulations covers the privacy obligations for establishing and operating ID scanning systems (Business Queensland 2022b). Queensland's networked ID scanner provisions, as implemented under the TAFV policy, must comply with the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth). This limits the scanning of IDs to patrons seeking entry to the venue and prevents staff from requesting access to IDs for purposes that may be malicious or otherwise inappropriate. Consent for ID to be scanned must be free and informed, and 'robust security measures' must be in place to protect the scanned information (OAIC 2019).

The Current Project

The independent impacts of the Newcastle ID scanner scheme have not been evaluated, but a decline in the number of recorded assaults following the implementation of the scanner system was noted in advice supplied to the Queensland Government in 2017 (Ferris et al. 2017). In light of this, as of 1 July 2017 and as part of Queensland's TAFV policy, ID scanners were made mandatory for late-trading licensed venues (those trading after midnight) located in SNPs for patrons entering after 10.00 pm. Recent quantitative evidence has identified that the ID scanner implementation in Queensland has been associated with reductions in police-recorded assaults (Coomber et al. 2021), ambulance attendances (Coomber et al. 2021; de Andrade, Coomber, et al. 2021) and improved outcomes with respect to the resolution of alleged crimes by the Queensland Police Service

(Coomber et al. 2021; de Andrade, Puljević et al. 2021). However, it is acknowledged that it can be difficult to discern the particular effects of individual provisions that are implemented as part of a broader policy initiative, such as the TAFV policy. Therefore, when assessing the effects and effectiveness of a policy implementation, there is particular value in understanding the experiences of people directly affected by specific provisions. This paper reports the findings of interviews with a range of key stakeholders in Queensland which examined the perceived benefits and limitations of the introduction of mandatory ID scanners.

Research Method

Participants

As a part of the broader evaluation of the Queensland Government's TAFV policies (Queensland Government 2015), in 2018 key informant interviews were conducted with 66 participants for the purpose of developing a comprehensive picture of the perceived effects of the legislative changes.

The sampling frame required that up to five individuals from key sectors were invited to participate, including hotel licensees, police officers, licensing personnel and local council employees. Other participants included healthcare workers (e.g., ambulance paramedics or emergency department doctors), SNP representatives and 'other' key informants representing security firms and transport (e.g., taxi drivers). Alcohol producers (such as Diageo) also requested to be included in the project. The breakdown of key informants by type is summarised in Table 1. The largest cohort was licensees, comprising 32% of the interviewees, followed by healthcare workers (20%) and police (12%). Specific interviewees were identified by either contacting relevant professional networks and organisations (e.g., the ambulance service or hospitals) or approaching local licensees directly. We also included a snowball sampling element whereby interviewees were asked if there was anyone else they recommended we speak to. Key informants primarily came from five purposively selected SNPs: Fortitude Valley (an inner-city suburb of Brisbane); Cairns, Townsville, Surfers Paradise (Gold Coast) and Toowoomba. However, we were also approached by a range of other stakeholders through consultation processes and interviewed people from Bundaberg and Rockhampton as well. Interviews were conducted by Peter Miller and Narelle Robertson.

Table 1: Key informant sample

Key informant	*n*	%
Council employee	2	3%
Healthcare worker	13	20%
Licensee	21	32%
Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation personnel	5	7%
SNP Support Service representative	7	11%
Police officer	8	12%
Alcohol producer	3	4%
Other (security firm worker, transport worker)	7	11%
Total	**66**	**100%**

Materials

Semi-structured interview questioning provided a consistent overall structure and allowed for themes or issues to be further explored. Questions were presented across four domains: 1) understanding of the policy, 2) awareness of and attitudes to the TAFV policy interventions, 3) current local issues (e.g., barriers to implementation of late-night alcohol restrictions, perceptions of impact and recommendations for improvement) and 4) the effects of the TAFV policy changes (licensees only). This paper examines the responses to questions about the use of ID scanners to explore the perceived benefits and limitations of the system as well as any privacy or other broader implications.

Interview questions of particular interest to this research paper include:

(1) What do you think are the benefits, if any, of implementing ID scanners?
(2) Do you think the scanners have resulted in more crimes in licensed venues being solved? Can you provide examples?
(3) Do you think the scanners have moved violent offenders and/or offences outside licensed venues? Can you provide examples?
(4) Are you aware of any issues arising from the use of ID scanners?
(5) Do you think ID scanners are being used to their full advantage? Are there any areas for improvement?

(6) Are you aware of the records helping to identify a crime suspect? If so, how many times?

(7) Do you know of any problems that have occurred? Issues with process/data?

Procedure

Researchers contacted key representatives from each of the informant groups between 1 February and 6 August 2018 (after the mandatory introduction of ID scanners). They were invited to participate in an interview or, via a snowball method, asked to nominate alternative appropriate informants. Participants who had contacted the research team or the Queensland Government to express interest in being interviewed were also invited. Following the provision of verbal consent, a mutually convenient interview time was agreed. The majority of the interviews were conducted over the telephone and recorded digitally, with consent. Five interviews were conducted face to face at a venue of the key informant's choosing. Each interview lasted for approximately 45 minutes.

Key informants who were licensees were asked whether their venue had been using an ID scanner prior to their mandatory introduction in July 2017. The majority had not—ID scanners were new technology for most of the licensees who were interviewed.

Ethics

Ethics approval was obtained from the Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee (2016-244), and approval was given by the Queensland Police Service Research Committee (QPSRC reference number DOC17/1297998) to undertake interviews with Queensland Police Service members.

Analysis

Interview transcripts were analysed thematically using NVivo 11 (QSR International Pty Ltd 2018). Thematic analysis (or 'narrative analysis') is an inductive reflexive design where rather than approaching a problem with a theory already in place, the researcher identifies and explores common themes that arise within the data being examined (Braun and Clarke 2006; Kellehear 1993). Where available, narratives offering opposing viewpoints have been included (Pope and Maysa 1995). As the questions developed for the project formed the basis of the initial themes, it was appropriate to undertake a template thematic approach (Brooks and King 2014). For template thematic analysis, the six key steps were followed:

1) become familiar with the data
2) perform preliminary coding and think about themes
3) organise the themes into meaningful clusters
4) define an initial template for coding
5) apply the initial template to further data, and modify wherever needed
6) finalise the template to apply it to the full data set (Brooks and King 2014).

Analyses were primarily conducted by Narelle Robertson but were refined following consultation with the research team. Given the nature of the analysis, responses to the questions are presented thematically rather than by question.

Results

The main themes derived from the interviews are set out below, with illustrative quotations provided. The majority of the commentary relates to the perspectives shared by informants with direct experience of ID scanners and/or the 'on the ground' issues that the scanners are intended to address: licensees and police officers. Informants from other cohorts—particularly the health and social sectors—did not have much to contribute. These informants offered more general opinions, but most had no direct experience of, or contact with, ID scanners. All interviewees were asked the same questions. For any cohort(s) whose views are not represented within the results, this reflects the fact that there was nothing to report.

Banning Order Enforcement

Assistance with banning order enforcement was the most commonly reported benefit of the mandatory ID scanner system across participant type. Informants also noted a subsidiary benefit: mandatory ID scanner use creates an even playing field as all venues are required to follow suit. This mitigates any potential risk that the presence of an ID scanner may lead patrons to presume that a venue has experienced particular behavioural issues or that patrons may choose to attend a different venue that does not use a scanner:

Anecdotally, police and venues have reported some successes in terms of, you know, refusing entry to patrons who they've got the information of being evicted from another venue, and in like helping to enforce the banning orders. (Council employee-02)

I think the difficulty before mandatory scanning came in was that, you know, typically that big roosters, as I call them, they've always had a pack of followers and they're quite popular. Don't ask me why. And so, what … so they'd just gravitate to places where they weren't banned. And when you have people banned on the court order list or your Liquor Accord list, places wouldn't … some nightclubs wouldn't abide by it and they'd just claim, we didn't recognise it. So, it's taken that out, it's created an even playing field, if you like. (Licensee-09)

I'm a fan of the scanners, great tool in identifying who's trouble and who's not and great for the police, great for the courts … and I always talk to the guys down in Dubbo still and I just think why haven't you got it in down there? Like, it's a great tool. (Licensee-21)

Public Safety and Patron Behaviour

Among licensee informants, ID scanners were generally associated with the perception of increasing public safety and had the additional effect of helping venues to promote their own public safety credentials:

The actual ID scanner on its own, now that we've had it for 18 months … 100% we back it. The actual procedural use of us wanting to be known as the most responsible venue in Brisbane … we scan 100% of the time we're open, let alone [after] 10 pm. (Licensee-16)

Opinion was divided on whether ID scanners encouraged patrons to act more responsibly, particularly since patrons knew that their personal information had been collected. Some participants thought that ID scanners did encourage people to be more responsible inside venues, exemplified by this quotation:

I think it does, the fact that we can identify who they are if they are in trouble … you have to remember when you enter a licensed venue, now we know exactly who you are, we know all your personal details for about a month. And people realise that. (Licensee-01)

Other participants did not perceive that scanners encouraged patrons to act responsibly. They contended that, although ID scanners increased perceptions of public and venue safety, they did not change the behaviour of patrons who were determined to act in a risky or troublesome manner. Also, it was recognised by the informants that changing behaviours requires patrons to engage in consequential and rational thinking when intoxicated:

No, hard core drinkers or troublemakers will fight anywhere. A person under the influence of a mind-altering substance like alcohol can reach a point where they don't care. (Police officer-07)

I think once you've taken drugs or drank too much, the people just don't care. (Licensee-03)

Some key informants reflected that ID scanners could, over time, contribute to a more significant cultural change within nightlife environments and that licensees should start to embrace their long-term value:

I just took a long-term view of it, and it cost us, but we cleaned the place right up … So, it's a matter of commitment as well and whether you're prepared to cough up a reduction in profitability. I think these days, now that it's universal, I think that it's … I wouldn't have had as much problem because you just go through it systematically and every time someone … there's a problem you report it, go through the police, get the police to put them on the banning list which … and then they're banned from more venues … The other thing, strength, in ID scanners that I see is … if the industry embraces them, they could have the same impact as breathalysers did on people's attitudes towards drunk driving. (Licensee-09)

Identifying Troublemakers and Suspects

Some informants, particularly licensees, perceived that a key benefit of ID scanners is their capacity to identify troublemakers following an incident within a venue. Informants reported that when ID scanners were combined with other technological surveillance, such as CCTV, this resulted in even better outcomes:

The number one benefit is in being able to accurately identify troublemakers. So, if somebody sees a fight or if police need to find out the identity of someone, prior to that the only option was to look at the cameras, and trying to identify someone purely from CCTV is nearly impossible. So yeah, definitely being able to look at the cameras now to say, 'Okay, well we know this is what he looks like'. Then you… if you go back to the ID scanner and you match up. (Licensee-02)
I specifically put an ID scanner in my business … to actually pick out the type of patron I wanted in my venue. I didn't want troublemakers in my venue. I didn't want any drug dealers or people playing up or people causing arguments or anything

like that. I actually banned them off my system straightaway. So, my venue didn't have to deal with those types of people. (Licensee-13)

A related benefit, particularly for police officers, is the capacity to use ID scanners and CCTV to identify suspects who are alleged to have committed crimes within or in the vicinity of a licensed venue:

Identifying suspects for assaults has been really good … I've got to go out and get the offender so that will be [assault number] four, and that's assaults that we previously quite possibly wouldn't have been able to solve because we hadn't been able to identify the person, so that's been excellent. (Police officer-03)

Look, I'm seeing some great results. Investigation-wise for police, great. Absolutely for ID. Especially if those guys have got the good CCTV systems in place. For us, any incidents we're investigating, bang, they're pretty well picked up. ID, identification of the person straight away. Our investigation commences and pretty much it reduces our investigation time. (Police officer-04)

Most informants perceived that ID scanners have resulted in more crimes in licensed venues being solved. This related not only to crimes within venues but also crimes that occurred in the public areas outside and contiguous to venues, particularly where the alleged offender had been inside a venue and had had their ID scanned:

The police are really hoping that that person will have been at a venue like mine, and they might … and so they'll look in there, they'll go to the 120-odd CCTV cameras that we've got installed around our CBD and go to the camera room and look back at footage leading up to it and in and around where the rape occurred in this hypothetical case. And then they're going to go … and then they'll see that person, and they'll track them back and they'll see that person's left my venue. … And so, then [the co-owner] goes on the ID scanner and she'll [co-owner] go looking for that description and … then she'll [co-owner] pick it up and that person entered our premises at 11.30 and got their ID scanned. And she [co-owner] gives them [the police] the registration number that goes with that person [the offender] … They've [the police] got them. And that sort of scenario comes up often with us where we are able to work backwards and help make the CBD a safer place. (Licensee-09)

I think they're [ID scanners] good. I've used them in relation to finding offenders because they've got to show, you know, ID and they get photographed … you know what they're wearing in town and I can see them on CCTV; so, it's brilliant in that regard, and I think it's good as long as everybody knows that they have to bring their ID with them and go out. (Police officer-05)

Licence Requirements

There was some discussion, particularly for smaller venues, about the lack of nuance in the details of Queensland's ID scanner provisions: the operational consequences of using ID scanners and the assumptions regarding the type of licence held and associated behavioural expectations. The following quotation highlights some of the practical implications of mandatory ID scanners for a smaller venue that operates with a commercial hotel licence, particularly from a cost and staffing perspective. The blanket nature of the ID scanner provisions does not sufficiently differentiate between different venue types or risk profiles:

We're a smaller venue … so there's been nights where we're being treated as the same as Thursday nights around the corner where they have 1500 kids descending on a big mega club on a Thursday night. We don't have that; we have 10 to 20 people … We can't have a guard for one hour to man the scanners, we have to have them on a four-hour minimum. So even if we wanted to trade from 10 till 11, that's 220 bucks gone … the perception by the powers that be is that because we've got a commercial hotel licence, we must be a commercial hotel; we must be a giant four floors, two restaurants, night club, TAB sort of venue. We're not, we have a commercial hotel licence so that we can tender for bids for running bars at festivals offsite. (Licensee-19)

Privacy and Fairness

There were some concerns expressed with respect to privacy issues arising from the use of ID scanners. While not a common finding, the concerns that were raised related mostly to the storage, use and sharing of personal data collected as part of venue entry requirements. Key informants from health and welfare backgrounds, and some who were included within the 'other' category, were more likely to raise concerns about privacy or the general level of surveillance in public and semi-public spaces:

The next significant problem we've got is the privacy issues … Now, the legislation supports the sharing of private data and the collection of private data, so my personal details from my identity document [are] shared between venues for the purpose of seeing if I'm on a banned list. (Other-07)

The potential for unfair imposition of bans was also raised by a number of informants—specifically, that the use of ID scanners as a networked system could perpetuate the risk of inconsistent or vexatiously imposed patron bans:

I've had another venue down the road giving someone like [a ban for] 10 years for, like, jumping the fence or, it's like it's just out of control these bans, and I'm like, this is dangerous. (Licensee-21)

Discussion

Key informants were asked about the benefits and limitations of mandatory ID scanners, which were introduced 1 July 2017 as part of Queensland's TAFV policy. One key perceived benefit, which was identified by licensees as well as other informants, was the capacity for ID scanners to assist with the proactive enforcement of patron-banning orders. Prior to the introduction of ID scanners, banning enforcement required venue security, staff and management to recognise the faces of individuals who had been banned from the venue by the licensee, police or the courts. However, it has previously been reported that it is not feasible to rely on staff memory to identify people who are not permitted to enter a venue (Miller et al. 2016). In addition, venues have limited knowledge of whether a patron attempting to enter their own venue had been banned elsewhere, for what reason and whether that ban extended across multiple locations. The banned patron could, therefore, simply go to another venue and would almost certainly be permitted to enter, thereby undermining the purpose and effectiveness of the banning order provisions. ID scanners help to address this problem of banned patron identification, a benefit which has also been demonstrated in other jurisdictions in which venue ID scanners have been introduced (Palmer, Warren and Miller 2011).

In line with previous research (Miller et al. 2012), informants noted that mandating the use of ID scanners across venues within the SNP allows for consistency with respect to the accurate and timely identification of problematic patrons who have received bans and, as a result, ensures that they are not permitted to enter licensed venues. However, informants acknowledged that problem patrons were still able to choose to attend venues that are not required to use ID scanners, such as those venues outside the SNP or venues that close at 12.00 am. To avoid a potential displacement effect, it was recommended as part of the overall evaluation that all venues, regardless of their location and closing time, should have to implement ID scanners (Miller et al. 2019). This sentiment was also identified in previous research that investigated the implementation of ID scanners in Geelong, Australia (Palmer, Warren and Miller 2011). In Geelong, it was hypothesised by key informants that the benefits of ID scanners for individual venues were clear, and if other venues chose not to engage in the scanner network, they were choosing to accept the risk of more problematic patron behaviours (Miller et al. 2012). In the examination of Queensland's TAFV policy, from which the data for this paper were derived (Miller et al. 2019), the hypothesis of geographical displacement was investigated, but no trends or patterns of increased assaults outside the SNPs were identified (Miller et al. 2019). While there were undoubtedly some people who chose to attend venues outside scanner networks, those who did visit non-ID scanner venues did not appear to be engaging in higher levels of violent behaviour. This finding may also reflect the different nature of the venues without ID scanners and their particular cultures with respect to alcohol consumption and acceptable behaviours (Homel et al. 2004), a point also noted by some of the licensee informants in the current study.

Some informants perceived that recording patron information on entry to the venue using the ID scanner did not seem to have a deterrent effect on troublesome patron behaviour. These informants reflected on this and suggested that once patrons were intoxicated, they may no longer care about or are less aware of their problematic actions. The extent to which patrons feel more accountable when ID scanners are in place and whether their sense of accountability or their awareness of surroundings is reduced when they are intoxicated has substantial implications beyond the ID scanner literature. It can also be reflected in the evidence around the requirements for responsible service of alcohol and its underpinning legislation. While advocates within the alcohol industry have argued that people are responsible for their own behaviour, the fact that many countries have implemented responsible service of alcohol provisions extends accountability to lawmakers and law enforcement personnel.

Much of this thinking and legislation has been informed by a range of experimental studies that show decreased cognitive ability and decision-making when intoxicated (Alderdice and Davidson 1990; McMurran et al. 2007) and reflect the well-known phenomenon of alcohol myopia, where intoxicated people tend to focus exclusively on single objects/feelings/people in the present moment (Steele and Josephs 1990). As with most issues of human behaviour, it appears likely that once their ID has been scanned, some people will retain an awareness of their surroundings and will not engage in aggressive behaviour within the venue, whereas others will be more affected either by the substances they have used or the social situation they are in and react to stimuli in an emotive fashion (often aggressively). This aligns with models of aggressive behaviour, such as the General Aggression Model (DeWall, Anderson and Bushman 2011) and the I³ model of aggression that highlight the role of personal social and environmental factors (Eckhardt, Parrott and Crane 2019; Finkel and Hall 2018). Miller et al. (2012) found that the number of assaults inside licensed premises in the city of Geelong reduced by around 20% after ID scanners were implemented, but the number of assaults on the street increased by around 20%. This finding suggests an interplay between intoxication, personality and social context: some aggression may be displaced from inside the venue to outside when patrons are aware that they are being observed. This potential interplay requires more research.

In the current study, one of the issues identified as being particularly important by police and licensee interviewees was that the use of ID scanners allows people who engaged in antisocial or offending behaviour in or around a venue to be identified, which, in turn, can help to solve crimes. Solving crimes in nightlife settings has traditionally been very difficult; there are large

crowds of intoxicated people (who do not make good witnesses) in dark settings and often dancing, which can involve gestures, movement and sexual undertones or overtones (Graham and Homel 2008; Monaghan 2007). Such environments mean that not only are the crimes and alleged offender/s much harder to detect (especially in the case of sexual assaults and harassment), but a satisfactory resolution can often be impossible.

Following the peer-reviewed report to the Queensland Government of the TAFV policy review (Miller et al. 2019), a scoping study examining the use of mandated ID scanners found that at least one serious crime (rape, grievous bodily harm) per week was solved in Queensland using information derived from the ID scanners (de Andrade, Puljević, et al. 2021). Such examples represent substantial but as yet unquantified benefits to the community in terms of optimising police effort and saving court time. ID scanner information in combination with CCTV can create much stronger forms of evidence and ensure more rapid investigation and resolution of cases (de Andrade, Puljević, et al. 2021).

Finally, there was an interesting dynamic evident with respect to the professional backgrounds of people commenting on the use of ID scanners. There were two main interest groups who focused on different issues and appeared to reach different conclusions: the licensees and police officers who engage with ID scanners and their associated issues firsthand on the frontline and the other interest groups, who generally do not have substantive experience of ID scanners because they are not directly relevant to their professional lives. Most of the commentary in favour of ID scanning came from those on the frontline—the licensees and police officers who directly interact with patrons and deal with offenders and who point to the benefits of ID scanners in deterring antisocial behaviour in and around venues, identifying suspects and solving crime. Key informants from health and welfare backgrounds, and some who were included within the 'other' category, were more likely to raise concerns about privacy or the general level of surveillance in public and semi-public spaces.

As discussed earlier, although the TAFV legislation went through substantial vetting in regard to privacy concerns and has many safeguards and complaint mechanisms, this remains poorly understood and has not been widely communicated. While there was some concern from key stakeholders in the wider TAFV study with respect to the use of personal patron data, the Queensland Government ensures that privacy requirements are met, and any breaches by venues are punishable by law. Following the publication of the two-year evaluation report, the Queensland Government placed a limit of six months on venue bans uploaded to the ID scanner network as standard practice (Miller et al. 2019). Further, procedural fairness was subsequently enshrined in the legislation with vexatious bans being outlawed and clear appeals mechanisms in place (*Criminal Code (Consent and Mistake of Fact) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2021* [Qld]).

The broader issue of the increased privatisation and civilisation of policing and the use of technology as a method of individualised social control continues to be an issue that warrants critical research and scholarship (Room 2012; Farmer 2021). There also remain important questions about whether interventions focused on individual behaviour are more effective than interventions at the community policy level, such as pricing or trading hours. The reality of current alcohol policy in Australia (most especially in Queensland and the Northern Territory) is that government responses involve a combination of policies that target both and include education. Such multisided policy responses have generally been informed by the success of tobacco control responses.

Strengths and Limitations

This study was successful in inviting and securing responses from representatives from a range of community services and liquor licensees. However, some groups may be less represented (despite substantial attempts to speak to a wide range of key stakeholders across Queensland), and the narratives examined are ultimately only from those people whose chose to engage. While the commentary presented in this paper represents the opinions and experiences of stakeholders, there was no requirement for them to provide supporting evidence. In the context of this study, a diverse range of stakeholders were engaged. The interviews were conducted in a professional yet critical manner. People were asked to provide examples and evidence, where possible, of their claims, providing some confidence regarding the findings presented. Finally, in-depth interviews of patrons were not conducted; however, these key stakeholder interviews were part of a larger study that also included 4,401 on-street patron interviews across four entertainment districts in Queensland, with 438 follow-up surveys for two key precincts.

Conclusion

This study has documented key informants' experiences of the introduction of mandatory networked ID scanners in Queensland's SNPs. The main benefits of using ID scanners were perceived to be the ability to successfully identify patrons who had been banned from venues and, as a result, to prevent their entry, as well as identifying alleged offenders, which can result in a major cost saving to the community. The possible overall deterrent effect of patrons being held more accountable for their actions—they entered venues knowing their ID had been retained—was also discussed. Despite these notable benefits, stakeholders remain conscious of a number of key issues with the ID scanner network, including concerns associated with privacy and with its inconsistent implementation across relevant venues. These findings highlight a need for ongoing

monitoring and refining of the ID scanner policy, including reviewing the days and/or times during which mandatory scanning is required, the specific licence and venue requirements, and the time for which details of banned patrons remain on the ID scanner network (Miller et al. 2019). Further trials in other jurisdictions are also strongly recommended.

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