

# Liquor not all bottom-up

Liquor licensing will play an important role in the reinvention of Perth's inner-city, but the proper control mechanisms are needed first. Emily Morgan reports.

**F**IFTY-FOR small bars have opened in the five years since changes were made to Western Australia's liquor licensing laws, altering Perth's hospitality landscape.

At the same time, however, alcohol-fueled violence is becoming more prevalent, and the debate continues around how to best mitigate these issues while facilitating the growth of a metropolitan Perth.

"There's no doubt that licensed venues will be an integral part of major urban development projects such as the Perth Waterfront and City Link.

Newly appointed Tourism Council WA chief executive Evan Hall says a key element is innovative design and an integrated government approach is required when it comes to large-scale developments such as the Perth Waterfront.

"I think Perth lacks public domain space, open space where you can have that mix of lots of different small bars, small cafes, small restaurants, with some open space for events and entertainment."

Mr Hall brings a fresh perspective to Perth, having arrived for the role only five weeks ago. He says the key to maximising the potential of opportunities like Perth Waterfront is a fine-grained approach that offers people an alternative reason to be in a public domain, as opposed to just drinking.

"Instead of really big venues you have a range of different bars and small in a range of people, geographically diverse and pulled in from different parts of the city."

But screen to watch major sports events, but there are reasons to be there apart from just drinking. That is the key to success."

Mike Daube, professor of health policy at Curtin University and director of the McCusker Centre for Action on Alcohol and Youth, agrees.

"There has been a bit of an assumption that tourism means selling more alcohol. Tourism is a lot more than that," Professor Daube says.

Professor Daube stresses the importance of monitoring levels of access, even with small bars, and agreed that giving people public space and an alternative reason to be there is a crucial element in redefining WA's relationship with drinking.

"It fits with the vision I hear Liss Scaddi talk about, which is to create an environment where people want to come to Perth, be in the middle of Perth, and drinking isn't the only thing to do," he says.

Racing and Gaming Minister Terry Waldron says the small bar licenses introduced in 2006 Racing and Gaming Minister Terry Waldron says the small bar licenses introduced in 2006 have helped to redefine the types of venues available in Perth.

"I think it is a good way to go. It creates a very responsible drinking atmosphere. The pace of small bars are rolling out in a controlled way," he says.

Mr Hall says attracting diverse demographics that act as moderating forces is also important.

"Your starting point is the legislation that establishes the developing authority, which clearly says one of your objectives is to create a lively public domain that is not just about bars or offices or residential space, but is somewhere that people mix," he says.

"According to Mr Hall, having one authority changed with the development of a project, and to come to the vision of a city."

Mr Hall is cautiously optimistic when it comes to the development of Perth's entertainment and events calendar, is integral to the successful management of a public space and, more broadly, a city.

## Act skewed

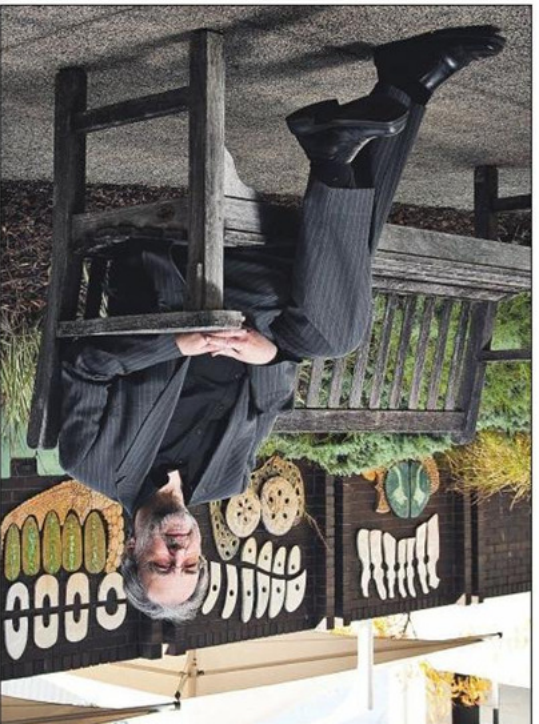
Professor Daube isn't anti-alcohol but is vocal about confusion surrounding changes to the Liquor Licensing Act made in 2006.

New objectives of the revised Act included developing facilities to cater to diverse community needs, and properly developing the liquor licensing Act.

Professor Daube believes the more recent objectives have confused the purpose of the liquor licensing Act.

It is all going to come together as a whole of the city, the arts precinct and departments ... government approach," Mr Hall says.

**BALANCE:** Mike Daube acknowledges the Department of Racing, Gaming and Liquor has a tough job, but says community needs should come before those of the liquor industry. Photo: Grant Curral



use of liquor, and providing adequate controls over its sale, disposal and consumption. As WA's population grows, and urban and site development expands, so do the complexities associated with balancing community categories associated with managing liquor licensing. Professor Daube believes the more recent objectives have confused the purpose of the liquor licensing Act.

It is just bizarre that the authorities have to