

Study: Limited support for claims ID scanners reduce late night violence

December 20 2013, by Sandra Kingston

Research by Deakin University has cast doubt on the effectiveness of ID scanners as a way of reducing disorder and violence in and around licensed premises.

Lead author of the research and criminology expert, Associate Professor Darren Palmer, said while people needed to be careful about how the results are presented the study provided limited support for claims alcohol-related assaults in and around Geelong's late-night venues have declined since the introduction of ID scanners.

"Between May 2007 and May 2008 there was no discernible reduction in either reported assaults or [emergency department](#) admissions," he said.

"Assaults continued to rise despite the ID scanners and other interventions," he said.

"Emergency Department data was similar with no evidence of decline after ID scanners were introduced.

"Interviews found key figures were supportive of the use of ID scanners and believed they were having an impact inside the venues as troublemakers were being deterred by removing anonymity and enabling the banning of troublesome patrons.

"The overriding finding of the research showed single interventions such as ID scanners might seem to offer a quick solution, but violence in and

around licensed premises is not so easily fixed. "

Associate Professor Palmer said ID scanning had been introduced in the Geelong CBD in 2007 and eventually made mandatory.

"By the time this study started in 2009 national media coverage widely praised the Geelong ID scanning initiative for its innovation and effectiveness in reducing alcohol-related violence," he said.

"We wanted to test those claims."

The research was funded by the Australian Institute of Criminology.

Associate Professor Palmer said ID scanners were favoured as an intervention because they were easy to 'see' and had an effect on people who wanted to see action.

"But beyond that we need to be careful about assumptions regarding deterrence and the accompanying loss of anonymity," he said.

"Most assaults and other offences are not planned in a rational, calculating manner but occur, often quickly or on the spot.

"Yes, there have been recent reports of a growing trend in planned, unprovoked attacks but as far as I am aware there is no detailed, systematic evidence of this."

Associate Professor Palmer said there was a need to look longer term to try to identify trends and build an evidence-based policy framework.

"There needs to be a much stronger commitment to understand in detail how interventions work, with what impact and with what other factors shaping the success or failure of the interventions," he said.

"A great opportunity exists in Sydney where ID scanners are part of the planned changes to address violence.

"While we have been very fortunate in having wonderful cooperation from the City of Greater Geelong, the local Victoria Police and the Community Safety Committee in terms of supporting the research and understanding the difficulties of accounting for multiple interventions, the pressures still remain to be more active and introduce more interventions.

"But this makes it more difficult to produce the evidence that everyone wants."

Associate Professor Palmer said more concerning was the loss of privacy and lack of interest in detailed regulation of the use of ID scanners.

"We are creating what are becoming significant databases yet they remain at the whim of private operators with no control except a personal ethical commitment," he said.

"That's all well and good for good operators but it is not an industry without unethical behaviour.

"Systems operators place conditions on use of their systems but given the data being collected far more needs to be done."

Further information:

The [report](#) 'ID scanners in the night-time economy: Social sorting or social order?' and is No.466 of the AIC Trends and Issues publication series. It was written by Deakin University researchers Associate Professor Darren Palmer, Dr Ian Warren and Associate Professor Peter Miller.

The report examines the impact of ID scanners on the level of disorder and violence in and around licensed premises. These are identification scanners placed at the entry to licensed venues that either scan documents such as passports or licenses, or scan fingerprints that are then linked to a simultaneous photograph. The data is then stored on the systems and can have notations added such as placing bans on patrons that cause trouble. They can also be searched to match descriptions of people who have allegedly committed offences.

More information: Read the report: www.aic.gov.au/media_library/p..._ndi_pdf/tandi466.pdf

Provided by Deakin University

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