
Thursday, 8 December 2005

PIONEERING CROWD CONTROLLER LAWS START TODAY

The Rann Government's new laws cracking down on crowd-controller violence and organised crime associated with the security and hospitality industries starts today.

"These are ground-breaking reforms that will have South Australia leading the nation in the push to eliminate organised crime from our pubs and clubs," says Premier Mike Rann.

"Police told the Government that about 80 per cent of crowd-controller firms had links to outlaw motorcycle gangs.

"I am concerned about the influence bikie gangs have on the crowd-control industry and that's why we set out to create specific laws to help combat them.

"Many of the outlaw bikie gangs are drug makers and drug pushers. We do not want them infiltrating or controlling the crowd-control industry so they can sell more of the drugs to our young people at nightclubs.

"We're also spending an extra \$1 million a year on more policing and licensing requirements to make sure it's enforced (15 extra SAPol employees and five more positions in the Office of Consumer and Business Affairs)."

Attorney-General Michael Atkinson says the laws introduce more robust checks on licensees and disciplinary action against existing licensees who may be involved with organised crime as well as dealing with assaults in and around licensed premises by security agents.

"Crowd controllers will now be subject to comprehensive background and identity checks, possible psychological assessment and refresher training, as well as random alcohol and drug testing," says Mr Atkinson.

"The character checks will also take into consideration the reputation, honesty and integrity of an applicant's associates, including checks of criminal intelligence sources.

"Existing security agents will have to undergo the same rigorous controls, with their fingerprinting and personal-information declarations to be processed within two years.

"We want to weed-out the dodgy characters in the crowd controller game as well as lift the standards with which they must comply.

"These laws are about making our pubs and clubs safer as well as stamping out drug dealing and other crime rackets that siphon off profits and steal identifies at licensed venues."

The new reforms include:

- **Compulsory licence suspension** for crowd controllers **charged with certain offences** (e.g. assault, drug or firearms matters);
- Power to **suspend the licence of any security agent** (by the Commissioner for Consumer Affairs) if charged with certain offences;
- **Automatic cancellation** of a security agent's licence **if convicted** of prescribed offences;
- **Fingerprinting** of security agents;
- **Random alcohol and drug testing** of crowd controllers;
- Authority to require a **psychological assessment** of crowd controllers or applicants;
- Power to require crowd controllers to undertake **specified refresher training**;
- Licensed premises can **no longer use 'ushers' or 'greeters' unless they are licensed** crowd controllers.

Some parts of the laws are being phased in so that appropriate regulations can be established and licensed premises can evaluate their individual requirements. These include:

- February 2006: a new approval process will begin for 'approved' crowd controllers who can carry out certain roles in licensed venues. This group will be required to complete extra training for things such as removing patrons.
- From 2007, only an approved crowd controller and other authorised people (under the *Gaming Machines Act*) will be allowed to remove people from licensed premises or use reasonable force if necessary to prevent their entry. The current legal right to remove people from premises remains unchanged until 2007.

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