

The Reaction of Bunbury Patrons to a Possible Total Smoking Ban in Public Bars and Nightclubs

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1. Introduction

This paper reports on a study conducted by the Centre for Behavioural Research in Cancer Control at Curtin University on behalf of the National Heart Foundation of Australia (WA Division) and the Cancer Foundation of Western Australia. The aim of the study was to assess the attitudes of patrons of hotels, bars and nightclubs in Bunbury to a possible total ban on smoking in such venues.

2. Methodology

2.1 Questionnaire

A questionnaire was developed that included a total of eighteen items covering demographics, frequency of attending hotels, bars and nightclubs, smoking behaviours and attitudes towards smoking in entertainment venues.

2.2 Sampling Procedure

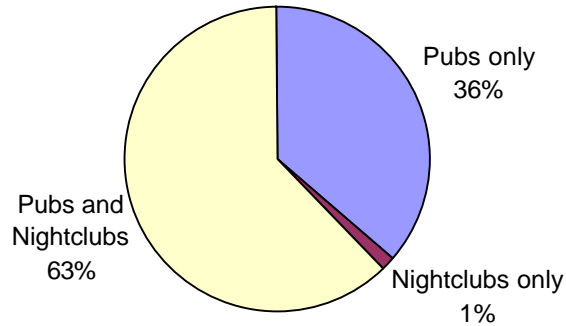
This questionnaire was administered by interviewers who approached pedestrians in the Bunbury city centre to take part in the survey during October 2002. A stratified sampling target was employed in an attempt to accurately reflect the proportion of people frequenting various drinking establishments. A recent unpublished study suggested that patrons of nightclubs tend to be comprised of equal numbers of males and females between the ages of 18 and 35 and regular patrons of pubs and sports bars are between the ages of 18 and 59 with approximately two-thirds being men and one-third women. Thus for the present investigation 250 men and women between the ages of 18 and 35 were sought who frequented nightclubs and 250 people comprised of 70% men and 30% women between the ages of 18 to 59 years who frequented hotel and sports bars.

3. Results

3.1 Sample Demographics

The eventual sample consisted of 506 individuals between the ages of 18 and 59 years including 300 males and 206 females. It was found that of those respondents attending a public drinking establishment at least once per month, nearly two-thirds (N=317) attended both nightclubs and pubs, one-third attended pubs only (N=182) and a very small number (N=7) attended nightclubs only (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Breakdown of sample attending pubs and nightclubs



Hence the responses of those who reported attending *nightclubs only* were combined with those who attended both pubs and nightclubs. As such the results will be broken down by these two groups hereafter. A breakdown of sample demographics by those who either attended *nightclubs and pubs* or *pubs only* is outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Sample Demographics by those who attend nightclubs and/or pubs

		Attendees of Pubs & Clubs <i>N=322</i> (%)	Attendees of Pubs only <i>N=184</i> (%)	TOTAL <i>N=506</i> (%)
<u>Sex</u>	<i>Male</i>	57	63	59
	<i>Female</i>	43	37	41
	Total	100	100	100
<u>Age</u>	<i>18 to 24</i>	56	16	43
	<i>25 to 29</i>	11	11	11
	<i>30 to 34</i>	9	18	12
	<i>35 to 39</i>	5	9	6
	<i>40 to 49</i>	13	22	16
	<i>50 to 59</i>	4	23	11
	Total	100	100	100
<u>Education</u>	<i>Year 10</i>	25	31	27
	<i>Year 12</i>	23	19	21
	<i>Trade Certificate</i>	18	15	17
	<i>TAFE qualification</i>	21	16	19
	<i>University</i>	13	20	15
	Total	100	100	100

Table 1 continued...

Employment	<i>Full-time</i>	63	60	62
	<i>Part-time</i>	17	17	17
	<i>Unemployed</i>	9	9	9
	<i>Student</i>	6	3	5
	<i>Retired</i>	0	1	1
	<i>Disability</i>	1	2	1
	<i>Home Duties</i>	4	8	6
	Total	100	100	100
Marital Status	<i>Married</i>	13	44	24
	<i>Defacto</i>	15	18	16
	<i>Divorced</i>	5	8	6
	<i>Separated</i>	4	5	4
	<i>Widowed</i>	0	0	0
	<i>Single</i>	63	24	49
	Total	100	100	100

The levels of education of the present sample closely mirrored those of the general population of Australia with 18% of the present sample having attained a trade certificate compared to 19% of the general population and 15% attaining a university degree compared to the national average of 14%¹. The participation rate in employment of the present sample (79%) was higher than the State average (50.1%). This is likely a reflection of the target group for the current survey being the most heavily employed section of society as it excludes children and people of mandatory retirement age. However the unemployment rate of the present sample (9%) was also marginally higher than the State average of 6.0% as of October 2002².

3.2 Smoking Behaviours

Respondents were asked about their smoking behaviours with results presented in Table 2 overleaf

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics 4224.0 *Education and Training in Australia 02/02/99*. <http://www.abs.gov.au/> [accessed 8 November 2002].

² Australian Bureau of Statistics 6202.0 *Labour Force, Australia, Preliminary 07/11/2002*. <http://www.abs.gov.au/> [accessed 8 November 2002].

Table 2: Smoking Behaviours by Attendance at Nightclubs and Pubs

Smoking Behaviour	Attendees of Pubs & Clubs N=322 (%)	Attendees of Pubs Only N=184 (%)	TOTAL N=505 (%)
Smokers	39	33	37
Ex-smokers	19	32	23
Non-smokers	42	36	40
Total	100	100	100

Reflecting the age differences between the two groups, a substantially greater proportion of respondents who attended *pubs only* said they were ex-smokers compared to those who attend *nightclubs and pubs*.

A breakdown of smoking behaviours by sex and age is also outlined in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Smoking Behaviours by Sex and Age (N=505)

	Sex (%)		Age (%)					
	Male N=300	Female N=205	18 to 25 N=215	26 to 29 N=56	30 to 35 N=63	36 to 39 N=31	40 to 49 N=83	50 to 59 N=56
Smoker	37	37	42	43	36	52	25	21
Ex-smoker	25	21	13	11	21	23	45	48
Non-smoker	38	42	45	46	43	26	30	30
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Equal numbers of males and females were current smokers. The age differences suggested in Table 2 are confirmed with the proportion of ex-smokers increasing as a function of age. The proportion of respondents never having smoked was inversely related to age.

3.3 Frequency of Attending Drinking Establishments

Respondents were asked how frequently they visited pubs and nightclubs. Results are outlined in Table 4 overleaf.

Table 4: Frequency of attending Pubs and Nightclubs

		Attendees of Pubs & Clubs N=323 (%)	Attendees of Pubs only N=182 (%)	TOTAL N=505 (%)
Pubs	<i>At least once a week</i>	67	41	58
	<i>Less than once per week</i>	33	59	42
	Total	100	100	100
Nightclubs	<i>At least once a week</i>	51	0	37
	<i>Less than once per week</i>	49	100	63
	Total	100	100	100

A majority of the total sample reported attending a pub at least once per week and one-third reported visiting a nightclub at least once per week. Two-thirds of those who reported visiting *nightclubs and pubs* indicated they visited pubs at least once per week and half visited nightclubs at least once per week. Under half of those who reported visiting *pubs only* reported doing so once or more per week.

A comparison of the smoking behaviours of respondents by their frequency of attending either *pubs only* or *nightclubs and pubs* is presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Frequency of attending Pubs and Nightclubs by Smoking Behaviours

Smoking Behaviour	Pub Visits (%)			Pub and Club Visits (%)		
	<i>once or more per week</i> (N=292)	<i>less than once per week</i> (N=212)	<i>Total</i> (N=504)	<i>once or more per week</i> (N=164)	<i>less than once per week</i> (N=274)	<i>Total</i> (N=438)
smoker	38	35	37	40	34	36
ex-smoker	20	28	23	15	28	24
non-smoker	42	37	40	45	38	40
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table 5 suggests that those visiting either *nightclubs and pubs* or *pubs only* on at least a weekly basis had a slightly higher propensity to smoke than those who frequent either

type of establishment less than once per week, however these differences were only small.

3.4 Hospitality Industry Worker

Respondents were asked whether they had ever worked in a hotel, nightclub or sporting club. Over a third of respondents said that they were either currently or had previously worked in such a capacity (see Table 6).

Table 6: Hospitality Industry Worker

	Attendees of Pubs & Clubs N=323 (%)	Attendees of Pubs only N=182 (%)	TOTAL N=505 (%)
Currently	8	2	6
Previously	32	30	31
Never	60	69	63
Total	100	100	100

3.5 Political Awareness

Residents were asked a series of questions in relation to local political affairs such as “Do you know the name of the local member of parliament for Bunbury?” and if so “What is their name?”, “Which party does the local member of parliament belong to?” and finally “Which party did you vote for at the last State election?”. Results are displayed in Table 7.

Table 7: Political Data

	Attendees of Pubs & Clubs (%)	Attendees of Pubs only (%)	TOTAL (%)
Q: Do you know the name of the local MP for Bunbury?			
	N=322	N=184	N=506
Yes	51	63	55
No	49	37	45
Total	100	100	100

Table 7 continued...

<i>Of those who reportedly knew their local member of parliament (55% of sample)</i>			
<i>Q: What is their name?</i>			
	N=164	N=116	N=280
Tony Dean	59	61	60
Geoff Prosser	24	22	23
Dan Sullivan	8	14	11
Other	8	7	8
Total	100	100	100
<i>Of those that correctly identified the name of a current MP</i>			
<i>Q: Which party does the local member belong to?</i>			
	N=120	N=91	N=211
Tony Dean (Labor)	85	95	89
Geoff Prosser (Liberal)	90	85	88
Dan Sullivan (Liberal)	78	84	82
<i>Q: Which party did you vote for at the last State election?*</i>			
	N=227	N=147	N=374
Liberal	34	46	39
Labor	40	35	38
Greens	17	11	15
One Nation	4	4	4
National	2	1	2
Democrats	2	3	2
Total	100	100	100

*18% of respondents reportedly did not vote and a further 8% could not remember whom they voted for or refused to answer the question. The percentages displayed for this item are therefore only for the three-quarters of the sample who did vote or who could remember whom they voted for.

Just over half of the present sample reported that they knew the MP representing Bunbury. Of this sub-group almost three-times as many could name Tony Dean, the State MP for Bunbury, over Geoff Prosser, the Federal MP for the region. Interestingly Dan Sullivan, the MP for the adjacent electorate Mitchell in the State Government, was also nominated by a substantial number of people. Even more interestingly over one in ten people who could correctly name the local MP for Bunbury were not aware of his political party affiliation. In relation to claimed awareness of the local MP for Bunbury,

there appeared to be only slight variations between those who attend *nightclubs and pubs* and *pubs only* with the latter being more confident than the former that they could identify their local MP, when in reality they were no more knowledgeable.

Reported voting behaviours of the current sample closely mirror those of the 2000 State election results with the Liberal Party receiving the most primary votes but Labor benefiting considerably from the secondary preferences from the Greens. Those attending *nightclubs and pubs* were more likely to vote for either the Labor Party or Green Party than those attending *pubs only*, who in turn were more likely to vote for the Liberal Party.

4. Smoking in Public Venues

4.1 Knowledge of Current Restrictions

Respondents were asked whether it was currently permissible to smoke in various venues. The proportions of respondents giving correct responses are outlined below.

Table 8: Proportion of Respondents Aware of Current Smoking Regulations

Venue	Attendees of Pubs & Clubs N=323 (%)	Attendees of Pubs only N=182 (%)	TOTAL N=505 (%)
Public Transport	97	96	97
Government Offices	94	96	95
Indoor Restaurants	92	95	93
Hotel Public Bars	93	91	92
Nightclubs	98	75	89
Hotel Restaurant	78	77	78
Hotels without food	71	78	74

The majority of respondents were well informed of where current smoking restriction laws permitted and did not permit smoking in public venues. The greatest levels of uncertainty seemed to arise in relation to whether smoking was allowed in nightclubs from respondents who visit pubs only. In addition many respondents from both groups seemed confused about current smoking regulations in relation to hotels where food is and is not served.

4.2 Attitudes towards Smoking Restriction Laws

Respondents were asked whether they believed that smoking would eventually be banned in pubs and nightclubs or whether the current situation would remain the same for the long term future. They were also asked whether they would support tougher restrictions being introduced. Results are outlined in Table 9.

Table 9: Expectancies and attitudes towards smoking restriction laws

	Attendees of Pubs & Clubs N=324 (%)	Attendees of Pubs only N=181 (%)	TOTAL N=505 (%)
Q: Do you think that smoking will eventually be not allowed anywhere in hotels, bars and nightclubs or do you think the current situation will stay the same?			
Eventually not allowed	61	74	66
Stay Same	37	24	32
Don't Know	2	2	2
Total	100	100	100
Q: Do you favour or oppose or have no feelings either way about not allowing smoking indoors anywhere in hotels, bars or nightclubs?			
Strongly in favour	34 } 55	47 } 66	39 } 59
Somewhat in favour	21 }	19 }	20 }
Neutral	16	14	15
Somewhat against	14 } 29	9 } 20	12 } 25
Strongly against	15 }	11 }	13 }
Total	100	100	100

Two-thirds of respondents thought that tougher smoking restriction laws are only a matter of time. Patrons of *pubs only* were more likely to view tougher smoking restrictions as inevitable than patrons of both *nightclubs and pubs*.

Nearly half the patrons of *pubs only* were “strongly in favour” of a total ban on smoking in pubs and nightclubs compared to one-third of patrons of both *nightclubs and pubs*. Overall a majority of respondents were either “somewhat in favour” or “strongly in favour” of a total ban.

Expectancies and attitudes were also compared with smoking behaviours as displayed in Table 10.

Table 10: Expectancies and attitudes towards smoking restriction laws by smoking behaviours

	Smokers N=185 (%)	Ex-smokers N=118 (%)	Non-smokers N=201 (%)
Q: Do you think that smoking will eventually be not allowed anywhere in hotels, bars and nightclubs or do you think the current situation will stay the same?			
Eventually not allowed	56	76	69
Stay Same	42	23	30
Don't Know	3	1	1
Total	100	100	100
Q: Do you favour or oppose or have no feelings either way about not allowing smoking indoors anywhere in hotels, bars or nightclubs?			
Strongly in favour	11	46	61
Somewhat in favour	18	19	22
Neutral	17	21	10
Somewhat against	26	8	2
Strongly against	28	6	4
Total	100	100	100

A small majority of smokers were either “somewhat against” or “strongly against” total smoking restrictions being imposed in drinking establishments but a majority also thought that such laws would eventually be imposed. In comparison a large majority of ex-smokers and very large majority of non-smokers were in favour of such restrictions being imposed and were highly confident such restrictions would eventuate.

Which political party respondents voted for at the previous State election was also compared to their support for a total ban on smoking in hotels, bars and nightclubs. Results are displayed in Table 11 overleaf.

Table 11: Attitude towards smoking restriction laws by voting behaviours

Total Smoking Ban	Liberal N=145 (%)	Labor N=142 (%)	Green N=56 (%)
Strongly in favour	50	37	50
Somewhat in favour	25	18	13
Neutral	13	13	20
Somewhat against	5	20	7
Strongly against	7	12	11
Total	100	100	100

Interestingly Liberal Party and Green Party supporters were much more likely to be in favour of a total ban than Labor Party supporters. These differences reflect smoking status rather than political affiliation (i.e. more Labor supporters than Liberal and Green supporters are smokers).

4.3 Responses to Government Action on Smoking Restrictions

Those respondents who were “strongly in favour” or “somewhat in favour” in regards to a complete ban on smoking in hotels, bars and nightclubs were asked whether they would accept the Government *not* disallowing smoking in such venues or whether they would protest in some way. Similarly those who were “strongly against” or “somewhat against” a total smoking ban being imposed at hotel and sports bars and nightclubs were asked whether they would protest in some way if such a ban was imposed. Results are displayed in Table 12.

Table 12: Rates of acceptance for supporters and opponents of a total smoking ban in all drinking establishments

	Reaction	Attendees of Pubs & Clubs (%)	Attendees of Pubs only (%)	TOTAL (%)
<u>Supporter action if ban not imposed</u>	Accept	N=178 80	N=119 76	N=291 79
	Protest	20	24	21
	Total	100	100	100
<u>Opponent action if ban imposed</u>	Accept	N=87 63	N=34 53	N=123 60
	Protest	37	47	40
	Total	100	100	100

A majority of both *supporters* and *opponents* of a total ban on smoking in hotels, bars and nightclubs stated that they would simply accept whatever action the Government took on the issue. A higher proportion of *opponents* stated that they would take some form of protest action. However this group constitutes a smaller proportion of the total sample and as such protesting *supporters* (N=69) outnumber protesting *opponents* (N=41).

Protesters from each group were then asked in an open-ended question to specify what form of action they might take. Similar proportions of protesting *supporters* and *opponents* nominated actions such as boycotting pubs and nightclubs, signing petitions, writing letters to newspapers and telephoning talk-back radio programmes. Nine *supporters* stated that they would complain to their local MP or the “Government” if a ban was not imposed. Only two *opponents* mentioned complaining to their MP or the Government and a further two stated they would vote against the Government.

All protesting respondents were then asked how likely it would be that they would undertake each of a series of prompted actions with responses being recorded along a five-point scale from “Definitely Not” to “Definitely Would”. Those that stated that they “Definitely Would” participate in various actions are outlined in Table 13 as a proportion of the total sample.

Table 13: Proportion of total sample who “Definitely Would” undertake various protest actions if Government failed to versus did implement a total smoking ban

Protest Action	If Smoking Ban <u>Not</u> Implemented	If Smoking Ban Implemented
Sign a Bar Petition	11.4%	7.7%
Actually vote against their MP	4.5%	4.0%
Threaten to vote against the Government	4.5%	4.0%
Actually vote against the Government	4.2%	4.4%
Threaten to vote against their MP	3.8%	3.2%
Telephone their MP	3.4%	2.6%
Telephone their local Councillor	2.8%	2.3%
Write to the Health Minister	2.4%	1.9%
Write to <i>The South West Times</i>	2.4%	1.8%
Write to <i>The Bunbury Times</i>	2.2%	1.8%
Write to the Premier	1.8%	1.8%
Write to <i>The West Australian</i>	1.0%	2.3%

Signing a petition at the bar seems to be by far the most likely protest action respondents would take in response to Government action either way. Writing letters to the Premier, Health Minister and various local newspapers seems to be the least likely form of protest action respondents would take. Comparing the protesting actions of *supporters* versus *opponents* would suggest that if a complete ban on smoking in hotels, bars and nightclubs was introduced then the (State) Government would lose a small proportion of votes and the MP for Bunbury would gain slightly. However these differences are only slight suggesting caution should be exercised when interpreting this data. Interpreting intended voting behaviours from self-reports on an issue like smoking bans is also a dubious exercise.

4. Discussion

The sex, age, education, employment and voting data gathered for the present survey reveals that the sample is reasonably representative of Bunbury residents that are likely to frequent hotels, bars and nightclubs.

The results suggest that a majority of Bunbury residents likely to frequent hotels, bars and nightclubs do not smoke and a clear majority are in favour of a total ban on smoking in hotels, bars and nightclubs and see such a ban as inevitable. Predictably those not in favour of a total ban tend to be smokers, but even amongst this group a majority view a total ban as inevitable. These results closely replicate a previous study conducted within Western Australia that suggested that two-thirds of the population anticipate a smoke-free hospitality industry within five years, with smokers and non-smokers sharing this view alike³.

The present survey suggested that the Liberal and Labor parties share fairly equal support amongst the constituents of the Bunbury electorate and that Green Party supporters would have considerable sway in terms of their secondary voting preferences. As such any attempts by each of the major political parties to woo Green Party supporters is likely to have a significant effect on who eventually holds the seat. Green Party supporters in the present sample were found to be amongst the least likely

to smoke and some of the most likely to support a total ban on smoking in hotels, bars and nightclubs. This puts them much more in agreement with Liberal Party supporters and at odds with some Labor Party supporters who were found to be both more likely to smoke and more likely to oppose any tightening in current smoking restriction laws. The Liberal Party candidate for the seat of Bunbury could therefore do well to take up a vigorous stance in support of a complete smoking ban in drinking establishments in an attempt to win the secondary voting preferences of Green Party supporters. Likewise the Labor Party candidate, whilst risking alienation from a small number of his or her own supporters, would also be well served to take up a similarly vigorous stance in order to deflect the potential inroads to be made by the Liberal Party candidate in securing Green Party preferences.

The results of the present survey suggest that whatever action (or inaction) the Government takes in regards to banning smoking in drinking establishments, it would be accepted by the vast majority of the present sample without complaint. This indicates a fairly apathetic attitude towards the issue. However in terms of absolute numbers, introducing a ban would certainly please more Bunbury residents who frequent hotels, bars and nightclubs than it would annoy. The most likely unprompted protest action that both *supporters* and *opponents* of a total smoking ban in hotels, bars and nightclubs would reportedly undertake would be to avoid such venues in the future - only a negligible number of respondents spontaneously mentioned taking any form of action against the Government. However, if all venues were smoke-free, such a boycott is meaningless.

When prompted the most likely protest action that both groups would reportedly undertake would be to sign a petition in a bar followed by making threats against the Government and their local MP and actually voting against the same. However the open-ended question responses suggest that political action of any support is very unlikely without a strong campaign instigated around the issue. Even then, it is questionable whether it could become a voting issue.

³ WA Taskforce on Passive Smoking (1997) *Passive Smoking Consumer Attitude Study: Research Report*. Prepared by AMR Quantum Harris: Victoria.

In conclusion, the State Government would hardly unleash a 'hotbed' of general discontent if it imposed a complete ban on smoking in hotels, bars and nightclubs. Indeed the general apathy of the vast majority of Bunbury residents towards the issue would seem to indicate that introducing such a ban would be almost cost neutral, if not positive.