

# Trends & issues

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**Foreword** | *Digital technologies are often considered effective methods of deterring or preventing crime. New forms of surveillance have particular appeal when attempting to reduce violence in the night-time economy, given ongoing concerns over perceived increases in the frequency and severity of reported assaults. This study examines the rationales for adopting compulsory patron ID scanning as a key method of reducing violence in and around licensed venues in the Victorian regional city of Geelong. Using a mixed methods approach, this paper challenges the popular perception that ID scanning has helped to reduce violence in Geelong's night-time economy. Further, the research identifies several limits in the administration of this technology that potentially undermine patron safety in the night-time economy. The authors conclude by proposing a series of reforms to address current regulatory gaps associated with ID scanning and related surveillance and identity authentication technologies to prevent crime.*

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## ID scanners in the night-time economy: Social sorting or social order?

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In recent years, mandatory digital identification scanning has emerged as a precondition of entry into many licensed venues throughout Australia. Given ongoing social concerns about violence in Australia's night-time economies, this untested policy initiative uses increased patron surveillance to enhance interpersonal security. Considered a supplement to the mandatory installation of closed circuit television (CCTV) systems, ID scanning promises to enhance social order by deterring wrongful behaviour and enabling the rapid identification of both perpetrators and victims of violence. This paper documents the findings of a detailed study, which examined the implementation of mandatory patron ID scanning in the Victorian regional city of Geelong, and assessed its perceived effectiveness in reducing violence since being first introduced in 2007 [1]. Although venue licensees and patrons view this technology extremely favourably, in-depth interviews with several key stakeholders revealed considerable uncertainty about appropriate security training, data management and information privacy arrangements. In addition, police and emergency department statistics demonstrate little connection between the coordinated introduction of ID scanners and reduced levels of alcohol-related assault in the Geelong night-time economy.

### Violence in the night-time economy

The considerable growth of night-time economies in urban centres throughout the United Kingdom, North America and Australia has generated widespread concern over perceived increases in the rates of interpersonal violence. Since the mid-1980s, most Australian states have adopted liberalised approaches to liquor licensing with a view to enriching commercial, entertainment and late-night trading activity. Such deregulation has enabled more venues with increased patron capacity to trade for longer periods (Zajdow 2011), as well as the clustering of nightclubs in urban entertainment precincts.



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Extensive research indicates that much interpersonal violence in night-time economies in Australia and the United Kingdom (Hadfield 2006; Hadfield, Lister & Traynor 2009; Winlow & Hall 2006) is directly linked to the lax administration of liquor licensing controls (Graham & Homel 2008; Homel et al. 1997). Questionable policing and security arrangements (Tomsen 2005), poor environmental amenity, inadequate entertainment and poor transportation facilities for nightclub patrons are also consistently associated with excessive alcohol supply and consumption, which increases the potential for interpersonal violence (Graham & Homel 2008).

Between 1 July 2002 and 30 June 2012, Victoria Police statistics documented a small yet consistent increase in reported assaults and related offences (Victoria Police 2012a). Of the 42,076 assaults reported in 2011–12, only 3.4 percent occurred inside licensed venues (Victoria Police 2012b). A further 25 percent were classified as ‘street related incidents’ (Victoria Police 2010: 18). However, at present, publicly available data in Victoria do not identify the time, precise location or proportion of incidents related to alcohol consumption in the vicinity of individual venues or in nightclub precincts. These limits make it difficult to determine overall trends in the frequency and severity of violent assaults in the night-time economy, which complicates the evaluation of any crime prevention initiatives.

Extensive media coverage and public outrage towards extreme cases of violence that lead to serious injury or death, frequently provide the impetus for introducing new and untested methods of enhancing venue security. One example involves the mandatory installation of high-resolution CCTV systems in all licensed venues throughout Victoria to increase patron surveillance and allow for the rapid identification of both perpetrators and victims of violence (Department of Justice 2009; VLRC 2010). However, evidence of the impact of CCTV in preventing, reducing or deterring crime remains equivocal (Wilson & Sutton 2003).

Digital identity authentication systems have similar appeal (Lyon 2009). ID scanning

invokes ‘commonplace’ technology (Goold, Loader & Thumala 2010), such as a desktop or laptop computer, a digital camera, a portable scanning device and a hard drive, to automate conventional manual identity screening processes before a patron is granted entry into a venue. With appropriate software, these systems enable door staff to accurately identify and prevent entry to those with a previous record of violence at the venue.

At the point of entry into a licensed venue, a person must produce a driver’s licence or passport, or their fingerprint. An image of the document or biometric identifier is then scanned into a portable computer located at the venue or conveyed to a server operated by the system manufacturer. Most systems also require a digital photograph to be taken when a patron’s identity is first recorded and at each subsequent attempt to enter the venue. The technology then automatically matches the photograph with the person’s identification document or biometric fingerprint. System administrators can then manually adjust an individual’s digital record if they have engaged in any violent behaviour or are evicted from the premises. If a banned person attempts to re-enter the venue, automated matching of the compulsory photograph with the ‘flagged’ identity record enables door staff to readily identify those who should be denied entry.

Variants of this technology have been adopted to manage street offending in crime ‘hot spots’ (Beckett & Herbert 2008; Gibson 2003) and to facilitate penalties for the sale of alcohol to minors in the United States (Cross 2005). As with CCTV, the presence of an ID scanner might deter some patrons from attempting to enter a venue or engaging in violent and disorderly behaviour. Increasingly, data networking can also enable rapid digital information sharing between venue operators, security providers or police, which can assist in the enforcement of patron bans or prohibitions on underage entry into late-night venues.

There are currently few ID scanning systems available on the Australian market. This means it is easier for system developers to ‘share a banned list of troublemakers’—whether that listing is local, statewide or

national’ (O’Brien & Duff 2011: 4) among all venues employing the same system. Therefore, ID scanners have enormous potential to address ongoing concerns about security and law enforcement arrangements in the night-time economy, given the seemingly pervasive risks of violence in Australian drinking culture (Tomsen 2005).

## ID scanning in Geelong

In December 2006, a widely publicised rape in the Geelong central business district (CBD) served as a catalyst for the systematic review of safety arrangements in the local night-time economy (Palmer, Warren & Miller 2012). Persistent media reports advocated a ‘crackdown’ on law and order to reduce the frequency and brutality of alcohol-related violence. A voluntary Liquor Accord involving local police, liquor industry representatives, council officers and other interested parties became the primary vehicle for a series of reforms that was formally launched in November 2007. An independent review of the Accord in the early 1990s indicated this was a valuable forum for developing collaborative evidence-based strategies to reduce alcohol-related harm (Rumbold et al. 1998).

ID scanning was initially piloted in several venues throughout the Geelong CBD in May 2007. No evaluation of the pilot was conducted. When the revised Liquor Accord was formally launched, all venues with a license to trade after 1.00 am were automatically classified as ‘high-risk’ and were required to install an ID scanning system at the licensee’s expense. The Accord provided no additional information on the days or times this technology should be used. There were also no clear protocols dealing with information security or the sharing of data between CBD venues, police and other agencies.

Although the number of venues using ID scanners since November 2007 has fluctuated, 10 hotels in the CBD initially employed the technology, while one openly resisted its adoption. By the commencement of this study in mid-2009,

national media coverage widely praised the Geelong ID scanning initiative for its innovation and effectiveness in reducing alcohol-related violence (Palmer, Warren & Miller 2012). This research sought to test the accuracy of these claims.

## Study design

A mixed method approach was adopted to examine the implementation and perceived effectiveness of ID scanners in the specific context of the Geelong night-time economy. Data were collected in three phases between March and November 2009.

### Publicly available data

The study commenced with an extensive analysis of local, national and international media coverage, legal developments and government reports dealing with ID scanners. This material indicated ID scanning is an increasingly common method of screening patrons and preventing violence in various parts of Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada. However, it also revealed that few protocols have been developed to manage data obtained by venue proprietors or third-party system administrators (QLJSC 2010). Two major Canadian information privacy rulings had examined the use of ID scanning in highly localised settings (Palmer, Warren & Miller 2011). Four states in the United States had express legal provisions allowing ID scanners to provide an 'affirmative defence' for any detected liquor control violations (Cross 2005). Beyond this, there were few guidelines for administering this technology and no studies examining its effectiveness. This information helped to develop a standard question schedule for the second phase of the research.

### Key stakeholders

Thirty-two key stakeholders involved in Liquor Accord discussions and the ensuing implementation in 2007 were interviewed between June and October 2009, with 17 agreeing to a follow-up interview in early 2010. The initial sample included 17 venue licensees who either implemented or resisted deploying ID scanners, four suppliers of this technology, three door and

security staff, five members of the Accord who were not licensees, a representative from the Geelong ambulance service and the Australian Hotels Association, and a Canadian licensee who implemented an ID scanning system in 2005 after several liquor control citations involving underage patrons. All interviews ranged from 40 to 120 minutes in length and were fully transcribed. This data was coded according to the perceived benefits, problems and effectiveness of ID scanning in reducing alcohol-related violence.

### Site visits

A total of 324 short on-site interviews were conducted with patrons awaiting entry or already inside 10 major venues in the Geelong CBD. These surveys sought to document patron experiences with and perceptions of ID scanners in reducing violence and promoting greater safety in the night-time economy. Responses to standardised questions were entered into a Personal Data Assistant. All surveys were administered between 10.00 pm and 2.00 am on Friday and Saturday nights from July 2009. Most interviews were completed in less than 10 minutes and over 95 percent of patrons who were approached agreed to participate. Over two-thirds of respondents lived in the Geelong region, the mean year of birth was 1985 (SD=6) and 54.5 percent of respondents were male.

During this period, observations from 53 site visits were also conducted. Researchers operating in pairs visited three venues after 10.00 pm on either a Friday or Saturday night. Observers recorded whether ID scanners were in use, any visible security arrangements and estimated intoxication rates using a four-point scale indicating *no signs of intoxication*, *slight*, *medium* and *high*. All observation data was entered into the Personal Data Assistant to promote accuracy and ease of analysis.

### Official statistics

Police statistics documenting alcohol-related assaults in the Geelong Local Government Area (LGA) and emergency department admissions at Geelong Hospital between 1 July 2004 and 30 June 2009 were also

analysed. Although the precise location of assaults and involvement of alcohol are not reliably captured in the Victoria Police LEAP database, it was possible to use a proxy to estimate the number of assaults attributable to the night-time economy based on the time listed for each record. Those reported between 8.00 pm on Friday night and 6.00 am on Sunday morning were classified as occurring during 'high-risk' periods of alcohol consumption (Dietze et al. 2001). Assaults reported between 8.00 pm and 6.00 am Sunday to Thursday were given a 'medium-risk' classification and those between 6.00 am and 8.00 pm Monday to Sunday were considered to occur during 'low-risk' periods. Assaults against police were excluded from this analysis.

### Analysis

All documents and extended interview data were analysed to discern the motives for adopting or resisting the implementation of ID scanners and industry perspectives of their benefits and limitations in preventing or reducing alcohol-related violence. All data from site visits provided measures of public attitudes towards ID scanners and estimated intoxication rates during times when there is a 'high risk' of excessive alcohol consumption. Police and emergency department data offered measures of the impact of ID scanners in reducing reported incidents of alcohol-related violence and injury after the formal adoption of the ID scanning policy under the revised Liquor Accord from November 2007.

## Results

### Key stakeholder interviews

All but one venue licensee favoured the mandatory use of ID scanners and further data sharing across all 'high-risk' venues in the Geelong CBD. Suppliers of this technology, police, security personnel and local council officers endorsed these favourable views subject to minor qualifications.

### Benefits of ID scanners

Respondents considered ID scanners to be the centrepiece of several measures

under the revised 2007 Accord that sought to proactively 'do something' to improve the management of the Geelong night-time economy and reduce both the frequency and brutality of violent confrontations. One licensee indicated most Accord participants initially viewed ID scanners as a contentious policy option. However, their effectiveness at 'high-risk' venues could be seen through discernible shifts in patron behaviour after their implementation.

I was apprehensive at first but since I implemented them over two years ago it's probably been one of the biggest tools that I believe has changed the behaviour of the patrons in our venues (Licensee).

ID scanners were also considered to reduce antisocial behaviour in licensed venues by accurately identifying people with a recorded history of disorderly conduct and ensuring patron bans could be readily enforced. This served two important deterrence functions. First, licensees believed potential troublemakers avoided attempting to enter venues where scanners were deployed. Second, the increased probability of accurate and rapid identification was considered to attract more orderly patrons. Both venue licensees and suppliers considered ID scanners removed 'anonymity' and reduced the likelihood that people with a propensity to engage in violence would attend the CBD nightclub precinct.

By removing anonymity, those who are prone to bad behaviour, and not necessarily just because of alcohol...but the fact that they know that they're not anonymous, it's pretty much a surety that they are going to be caught, be able to be identified and then caught, so they don't do it. They'll go elsewhere (Licensee).

Cost efficiency was significant, as 'safety is business' in the night-time economy. Both licensees and system suppliers indicated ID scanners are a low, one-off expense that is easy to install, maintain and upgrade. Most third-party system administrators provide low-cost technical support, software upgrades and data storage facilities. Thus, the technology is considered relatively easy to administer on-site and involves limited financial outlay.

Appearing to do something proactive about violence in the night-time economy, deterrence and cost efficiency were consistently viewed by venue licensees and other Accord participants as countering any perceived limitations of this technology. Commercial imperatives reinforced these themes among suppliers of ID scanning systems. Although one licensee expressed concern that police had placed undue pressure on 'high-risk' venue proprietors to implement the technology as a concession to the local liquor industry's resistance to a proposed 2.00 am lockout at all venues, ID scanners were valued as a visible, deterrent-based and cost-effective measure designed to reduce violence. Only one licensee acknowledged that scanners might not deter drunken patrons engaged in 'spur of the moment' confrontations, who are unlikely to consider or care about any potential ramifications from identity-based or CCTV surveillance.

### Problems

When questioned further, it became clear that venue licensees, door staff and security personnel were also aware of several anomalies in the use of ID scanners that could impact on, but not override, their potential to reduce violence. During peak times when long queues can lead to patron antagonism, a policy of *selective (non) scanning* was implemented at most larger venues. Patrons considered to be non-threatening, such as young women, were generally ushered past the scanning unit without undergoing an identity check. Young men who conformed to an accepted risk profile were commonly entered into the system as a matter of course.

Door staff questioned the uneven application of selective non-scanning. In line with recent observations in Edmonton, Canada (Haggerty & Tokar 2012), one door worker indicated this 'no hands on' policy undermined the potential for ID scanners to reduce violence. Friends of door and security staff, preferred customers and venue members routinely bypassed the system with no electronic record of their presence (Haggerty & Ericson 2000). One respondent indicated it was difficult to challenge this practice.

[T]he bouncers do let in people that they know, like bikies, really rough people, and those kinds of people can make everyone else feel intimidated...But there [were] always fights. It seemed to always kind of be the same kind of people...Like they kind of just went there for fighting...I don't think it [a scanner] really makes a difference...I think they are going to do it [fight] anyway because most of the time they are wasted so they are not going to think about 'the scanners are there, I'm not going to do this' (Door staff).

While a perceived major benefit of ID scanning is its potential to remove patron anonymity, selective non-scanning undermines this in two ways. As the above quote indicates, it can enable security staff to allow patrons willing to engage in violence to enter licensed venues (Haggerty & Tokar 2012). However, by informally profiling young men deemed to be potential 'troublemakers', a considerable proportion of potential victims of violence might remain difficult to identify if their personal details are not entered into these systems (Harcourt 2007). This second issue was not recognised by any key stakeholders interviewed for this study.

All venues are required to display 'clear signage at the front of the premise explaining that the patrons details were kept for 28 days and then destroyed' (Licensee). However, door staff indicated there were few protocols for describing the ID scanning policy to concerned patrons. While this was rarely necessary, door staff commonly advised 'the law' mandated ID scanners. Concerned patrons could try entering another venue or were advised to contact system administrators during business hours. Concerns were seldom raised about whether this advice undermined a patron's voluntary consent to having their personal information shared and stored at the venue.

Data retention policies are also adapted from principles developed for CCTV, requiring personal information to be deleted after 30 days. Suppliers indicated various operating procedures and technical protocols were developed in line with both state and federal privacy laws. One biometric system incorporated a complex data encryption system that could only be



accessed by third-party administrators and was developed through the use of privacy consultants to ensure compliance with the national privacy principles. However, this system has yet to be incorporated in Geelong.

One ID system supplier questioned the lack of clear regulatory standards regarding the collection and dissemination of personal data. As demand increases for interoperable technology and greater information sharing about banned patrons among venue managers, police and security agencies, there is a need for the development of clear regulatory and data management protocols. Nevertheless, the following quote also highlights that increased regulation may prioritise information privacy over patron safety.

The fact that there are no protocols... leaves the use of these things vulnerable. They have been highly effective and the misuse of one could bring down a lot of good work and that worries me quite a bit. So in terms of is regulation needed for it? Yes. But the problem is when you get regulators involved...they are largely coming from an angle that is myopic and not a balance of what the real objective is; and that is making it safe. And making it safe means there has to be some surrendering of privacy (System Manufacturer).

Licensees favoured the open circulation of information between all Geelong venues and with police to prevent 'bar hopping' by flagged or banned individuals. As one venue licensee described:

If you can get it [ID scanning] implemented on a grand scale in the CBD at least it has some sort of impact because if they were to be banned from [one venue]...[unruly patrons] used to be able to walk into any other venue they can. But now it impacts on all the CBD venues so if they're banned they're banned everywhere...(Licensee).

However, this study revealed an important paradox associated with information privacy and crime prevention. Victoria Police

consistently used information privacy as the standard justification for only providing generalised LGA data rather than the specific locations of reported assaults or basic demographic characteristics of victims and suspects. Local government representatives participating in the development of the November 2007 Accord considered this was the major impediment to the development of meaningful evidence-based policies to combat alcohol-related violence.

## Patron surveys and site observations

Patrons were asked about their previous experiences with ID scanners, whether they had been scanned before entering any Geelong venue in the previous 12 hours and to rate their satisfaction with this requirement. Just over 50 percent of respondents (n=169 of 324) had been in one or more licensed venues within 12 hours of being surveyed, with 68.6 percent indicating their ID had been checked and nearly half (47.3%) confirming their details were electronically scanned. Around the same proportion of males (68.5%) and females (68.8%) indicated their ID was

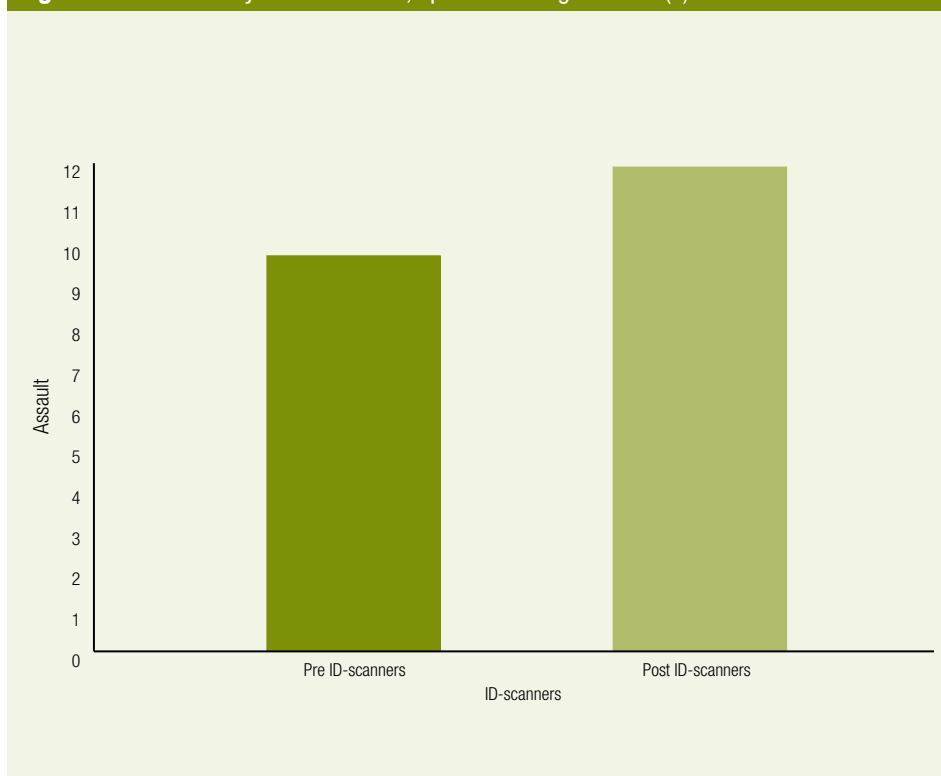
checked on the night of the interview. The mean satisfaction score for ID scanners across the entire sample was eight out of 10.

At least five site visits were conducted at 10 venues in the Geelong CBD. In 58 percent of these sessions (29 visits), all patron ID documents were scanned electronically before entry. In one-quarter of cases, no ID was checked at any point. Observers reported their own ID was not checked in 14 percent of site visits. Perceived patron intoxication levels were considerably higher in venues with ID scanners. However, this is to be expected as all venues with ID scanners are automatically classified as 'high-risk' and trade after 1.00 am.

## Police and emergency department data

Police data indicate that 5,064 assaults were recorded between 2004–05 and 2008–09 in the Geelong LGA. Overall, this represents an upward trend over time, though with significant fluctuation (see Figure 1). However, the number of reported offenders and victims increased after ID scanners were mandated under the revised Liquor Accord. Figure 1 outlines average monthly assault data for the 'high-risk'

**Figure 1** Mean monthly street assaults, April 2005–August 2009 (n)



**Table 1** Offenders and victims by year, Geelong LGA, 2004–2009

	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Offenders	587	782	808	924	953
Victims	758	929	947	1080	1103

alcohol consumption period between 8.00 pm on Friday night and 6.00 am on Sunday morning before and after ID scanners were introduced. While the overall rates are relatively low, a slight increase is discernible after the revised Accord was launched.

Table 1 documents the aggregate rates of offenders and victims identified in the Geelong LGA. These figures also indicate ID scanners had no immediate impact in reducing assaults reported by or to local police from mid-2007 to mid-2009.

Figure 2 documents trends in reported assaults during ‘high-risk’ alcohol consumption times between July 2004 and May 2009 based on location. Monthly trend data identify fluctuating assault rates in the street, private homes and on licensed premises. When this data is depicted at quarterly intervals, there is a reduction in the number of assaults in licensed premises from July 2008. By this time, ID scanners

were an accepted facet of Geelong’s night-time economy.

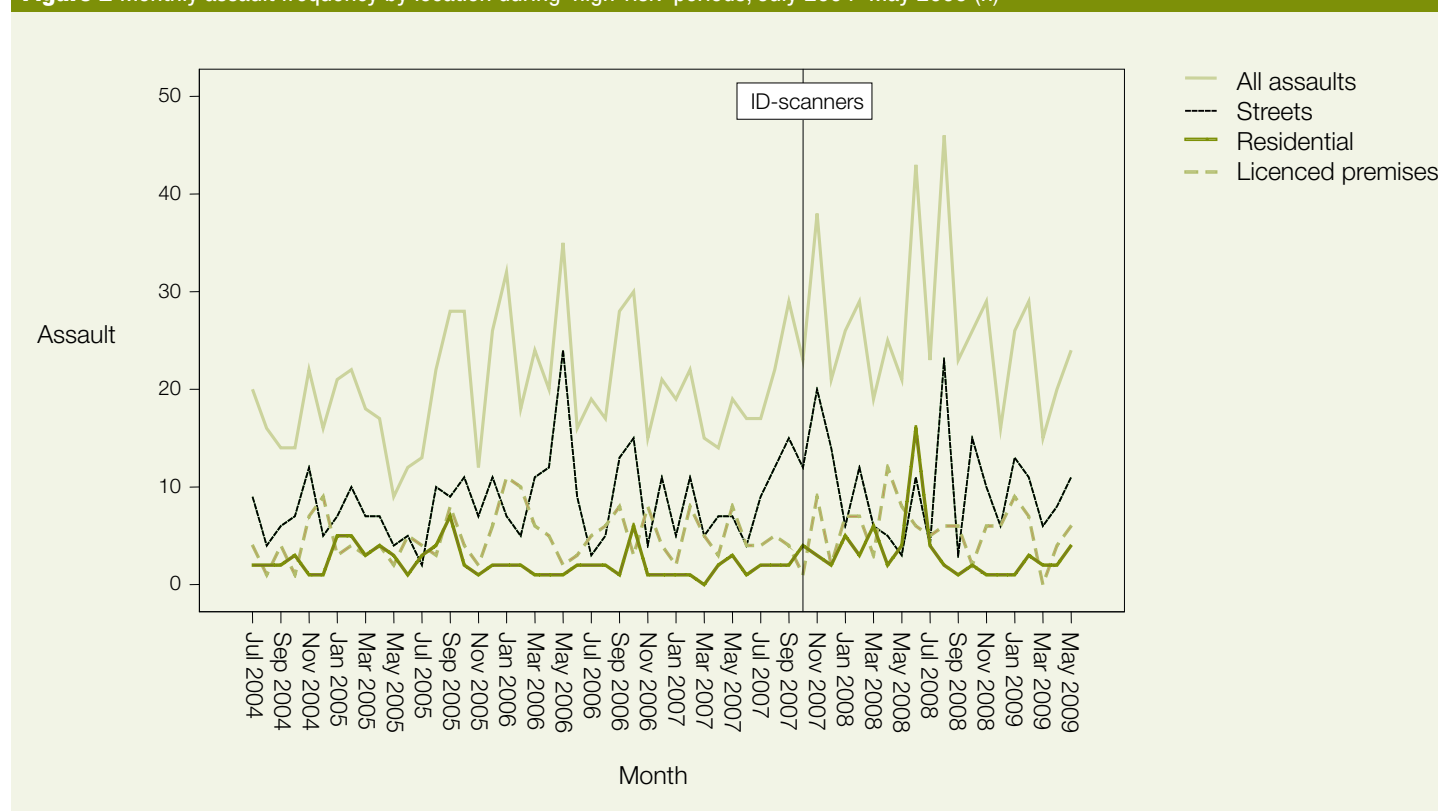
Emergency department data reinforce these trends, even though changes in the reporting of alcohol-related triage incidents were introduced between 2005 and 2009 [2]. Time series analysis indicates around 25 percent of alcohol-related emergency department admissions during ‘high-risk’ periods occurred between 11.00 pm and 1.00 am, with a sharp increase exceeding 100 percent between May and December 2007 (Miller et al. 2011; Palmer, Warren & Miller 2011). These rates subsequently plateaued, then fluctuated, to produce an aggregate increase in alcohol-related assault and emergency department admissions since 2005.

## Discussion

Despite claims by venue licensees and system suppliers, this study provides limited

empirical support for claims alcohol-related assaults in and around Geelong’s late-night venues have declined since the initial pilot of May 2007 and the subsequent mandated use of ID scanners under the revised Liquor Accord. Between May 2007 and May 2008, there was no discernible reduction in either reported assaults (see Figure 2) or emergency department admissions that identify alcohol-consumption as a key variable. Increases in street assaults from July 2008 suggest ID scanners may have produced a displacement effect, but firm conclusions on this point are not possible. This is an example of one of Brown’s (2013) key principles of regulation of crime prevention interventions—they must be effective at preventing crime.

A different picture emerges when these figures are considered in light of key stakeholder interview data. Venue licensees and system managers equate improved business with the erosion of anonymity and deterrence. However, selective non-scanning has significant potential to undermine these key benefits. Door staff indicated this form of profiling had not reduced violence at some Geelong venues.

**Figure 2** Monthly assault frequency by location during ‘high-risk’ periods, July 2004–May 2009 (n)

More problematically, the inability to rapidly identify a significant proportion of potential crime victims is a recognised by-product of selective profiling (Harcourt 2007). Selectively targeting potentially 'troublesome' young men allows certain individuals or groups to remain anonymous and potentially less readily identified if a victim or offender. This generates a rather skewed 'surveillant assemblage' (Haggerty & Ericson 2000: 619) that is difficult for those who are proactively targeted to contest.

However, ID scanners have considerable value in enforcing bans from licensed venues. By nature, banning policies can only be enforced through identity authentication (Beckett & Herbert 2010; Lyon 2009). System suppliers, venue licensees and security staff unanimously agreed that the use of ID scanners is an efficient method for excluding banned patrons. Most Australian states have legislatively mandated short-term public order bans and long-term prohibitions on entering licensed venues or nightclub precincts for serious alcohol-related offences that operate alongside a licensee's proprietary right to deny entry or evict any patron (see Palmer & Warren 2013). The information about patrons that have been banned by venues or have been subject to legislated banning orders is shared between police and venues via the local Liquor Accords, thus avoiding breaches of privacy regulations.

However, the lack of clear policy guidance on implementing ID scanning technology enables door staff and security personnel to subvert the intent of removing patron anonymity, which can occur at the expense of 'the actual task of providing [human] protection' (Zedner 2006: 277). In Harcourt's (2007: 23–25) terms, this is a form of 'elasticity'. Selective profiling that aims to enforce venue exclusions legitimises gaps in the administration of ID scanning that either allow other forms of crime to remain immune from the surveillant assemblage, or that potentially compromises the identification of victims of violence with no recorded electronic profile. This helps to explain why there has been no significant decline in reported assaults or emergency department

admissions between November 2007 and mid-2009.

Crime prevention technologies present numerous challenges for privacy regulators in Australia (ALRC 2008) and internationally (Brogan 2002/2003; Goold & Neyland 2009). Considerable patron satisfaction with ID scanners in Geelong reflects public 'apathy about having one's driver's license scanned' (Holloman & Ponder 2007: 45) as identified in US literature. This also reveals immense trust that any personal data that is collected is unlikely to be 'used outside of the scope of ensuring a safe and legal atmosphere within the establishments' (Holloman & Ponder 2007: 45).

By contrast, privacy is a significant barrier to the dissemination of valuable information about trends in alcohol-related assault that reinforces the legitimacy of ID scanners as a crime prevention measure. The availability of data indicating where victims and perpetrators of assault had last consumed alcohol in the New South Wales city of Newcastle was considered vital to the development of targeted evidence-based interventions leading to a 30 percent reduction in alcohol-related assaults (Wiggers 2007; Wiggers et al. 2004). Such data could have additional value in measuring the displacement effects of any ID scanning or other forms of surveillance introduced into the night-time economy.

Finally, the uncritical acceptance of ID scanners in Geelong is a symptom of broader trends in the 'governance of security' through established industry networks (Johnston & Shearing 2003: 26; Wood & Dupont 2006). In Geelong, a security representative proposed the introduction of ID scanners to members of the Liquor Accord that included delegates from the local nightclub association, the safety committee, police and local government employees. The Geelong media also played a central public relations function that consistently endorsed the ID scanners policy (Palmer, Warren & Miller 2012). Industry resistance to a proposed venue lockout favoured by police ensured ID scanners would be a tangible regulatory 'bargaining tool' with significant commercial appeal. These political processes are crucial

in understanding the popular acceptance and subsequent normalisation of ID scanners in the Geelong night-time economy and extend to other regional and urban centres contemplating the introduction of this and other surveillance technologies to combat alcohol-related violence.

## Conclusion and policy considerations

The introduction, acceptance and normalisation of ID scanners in Geelong bear remarkable similarities to the permeation of open space CCTV systems in Australia since the mid-1990s (Wilson & Sutton 2003). As with various security technologies, the use of digital ID authentication systems to prevent crime is poised to expand. This technology generates extensive data 'assemblages' about patron movements to facilitate the enforcement of bans and other forms of spatial exclusion, with data about 'flagged' persons matched to digital photographs, biometric identifiers, names, addresses and driver's license numbers. Largely administered by commercial security agents, these systems can be easily networked across towns, cities, regions, states and internationally.

However, the frequent demand for immediate and tangible solutions to crime problems tends to overlook significant harms that may stem from new technological innovations. The widespread uptake of surveillance technologies and the substantial data sharing potential they offer in preventing crime, enhancing law enforcement efficiency and promoting security, also produces a clear need for independent and ongoing evidence-based research to inform the effective and safe use of such technologies (VLRC 2010). As data from ID scanners can potentially transcend state borders, it is suggested that a national working group be established to examine the regulatory options for this and other forms of population surveillance designed to prevent crime, as has been long recognised in relation to CCTV (Wilson & Sutton 2003). Key issues to be considered include:

- A temporary moratorium on the use of ID scanners pending the development of an appropriate regulatory framework for data collection, storage, dissemination and privacy protection.
- The expansion of private security licensing to cover all personnel involved in using ID scanners, including the development of appropriate training and accountability measures.
- Specific policies and accountability processes for information sharing between private venue operators, security providers, police and criminal intelligence agencies.
- The provision of alternatives to ID scanning where patrons are unwilling to consent to the collection and storage of their personal information.
- The development of an independent and transparent complaints mechanism.
- The revision of current public order, summary offences, criminal, liquor licensing, administrative appeals and privacy regimes to develop an appropriate audit and compliance procedure.
- The promotion of ongoing local, state, national and international research into ID scanners, related electronic surveillance measures and their impact in preventing crime and alcohol-related harm.

Concepts of effectiveness based on deterrence, reduced anonymity and profiling have normalised digital ID verification as a legitimate form of social sorting. This study demonstrates that ID scanners are a tangible policy supported by what are currently poorly validated claims of 'success'. The rapid introduction of these new technologies aimed at producing fast and discernible results has occurred with little consideration for the development of appropriate protocols regarding the collection, use, sharing, storage, maintenance, access to and destruction of digital information. Further, there has been limited oversight of how private venue operators or third-party security providers manage these databases independently of, and in conjunction with, the police.

These concerns have been overlooked because the commercial appeal of these relatively inexpensive technologies is

central to their acceptance as prevention measures within the night-time economy. Equivalent concerns over information privacy have invariably been outweighed by public anxieties about crime and violence. While this research indicates that such concerns have only been recognised by a minority of stakeholders involved in the formulation and implementation of the Geelong ID scanners policy, they demonstrate the need for ongoing research and a coherent policy direction.

## Notes

1. A trial commenced in May 2007 with further ad hoc additions to the use of ID scanners up to October 2007, which pre-empted the formal launch of the revised Liquor Accord in November 2007. This paper adopts November as the significant starting point.
2. This study commenced before, though overlapped with, a second larger comparative study examining various alcohol-related interventions, including ID scanners, in the regional cities of Geelong and Newcastle.

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