

The Carisbrook Liaison Group
A Kiwi Approach to Event Management

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ABSTRACT

Rugby football is New Zealand's national sport and has a passionate following. Dunedin's Carisbrook, the 'Home of Otago Rugby,' is the second largest stadium in New Zealand and the venue for a number of events with capacity crowds each season. In a city of Dunedin's size (population 120,000) an attractive, safe and popular sporting venue is an asset to the community, both economically and socially.

The consumption of alcohol (primarily beer) is usually associated with the social aspect of watching a rugby match. Crowd and alcohol related problems at Carisbrook were the catalyst for the Police, other regulatory agencies and stakeholders to identify lack of communication and intervention as contributors to these problems. A need to work together to enhance the standards and reputation of Carisbrook as a safe and attractive environment was identified. At this point the Otago Rugby Football Union, regulatory agencies and other stakeholders formed the Carisbrook Liaison Group.

With communication as a primary tool the Group analysed the problems occurring and identified a number of strategies to deal with alcohol related disorder and crowd control difficulties.

Evolution of the Groups intervention strategies continued in practice resulting in fewer incidents of alcohol and crowd problems and the creation of higher public expectations in terms of the quality of attending the venue. Evaluation of the Group and its methods indicated a high level of satisfaction and achievement.

This paper explains the background to the formation of the Group, the interventions developed and how they were successfully achieved and measured.

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The City of Dunedin

Dunedin, often called the "Edinburgh of the South" is a university city with a rich cultural and architectural heritage. Of its 120,000 inhabitants, 20,000 are students at the University of Otago or allied tertiary institutions. Dunedin is centred in the region of Otago, well known as a natural playground offering everything from skiing, bungee jumping and white water rafting to the quieter pleasures of wildlife, enchanting scenery and local cuisine. The alpine resorts of Queenstown and Wanaka are just a few hours drive away.

Carisbrook

This stadium is owned and operated by the Otago Rugby Football Union (ORFU) and is "home" to the Otago Rugby team and the Otago Highlanders Super 12 Rugby team.

Capacity, Description and Crowd Make-up

With a capacity of 40,000, Carisbrook is the second largest sporting venue in New Zealand (Auckland's Eden Park has a capacity of 48,500). Carisbrook consists of corporate boxes, hospitality and function centres, covered stands, uncovered stands and a large terrace area (standing only) with a capacity of 13,000. The crowd makeup is a mixture of urban and rural supporters due to the large catchment area for the Otago National Provincial Championship and the Otago Highlanders Super 12 teams. Rugby fans travel 300 - 400 kilometres to events from rural areas. A significant proportion of the crowd is made up of university students who see Carisbrook very much as part of the local 'scarfie' culture. Students are a valued, significant, vociferous and at times overly "boisterous" part of many matches at Carisbrook.

The Sale of Liquor Act 1989

The statute for control over the sale and supply of liquor came into effect in 1990 and is considered to be liberal in comparison with other liquor legislation throughout the world. The object of the Sale of Liquor Act is to "*...establish a reasonable system of control over the sale and supply of liquor to the public with the aim of contributing to the reduction of liquor abuse...*".

The Regulatory Agencies

Three regulatory agencies have statutory roles and responsibilities pursuant to the Sale of Liquor Act. These agencies are the Police, Dunedin City Council District Licensing Agency and the Public Health Service of HealthCare Otago. The agencies are responsible for reporting on all new licence applications, and monitoring, reporting and taking action where required in respect of existing liquor licences. Public Health's perspective is alcohol health promotion and ~~**Host~~ Responsibility". All agencies report to a national Liquor Licensing Authority.

The Dunedin agencies see the way in which they work as a partnership. The partnership involves working together with other stakeholders including the liquor industry, community and interest groups, the Liquor Licensing Authority and the public. The object of the act has been the catalyst for a number of partnership initiatives with the goal of reducing alcohol related harm.

The Stakeholders in Carisbrook

The Otago Rugby Football Union sells liquor at the venue pursuant to a special licence. In addition to the regulatory agencies, other stakeholders in Carisbrook include the Dunedin City Council's Transportation and Health departments, the Ambulance service, the crowd control staff provider, liquor and food franchise holders and service clubs who assist with the provision of ushers. Other organisations are involved when required, for example the Otago Cricket Association in relation to cricket matches at the venue.

SCANNING:

Carisbrook has a long history as an unsupervised drinking environment, with little or no restriction on alcohol being brought into the ground. In 1991, when the Otago Rugby Football Union began selling beer on site, liquor consumption and associated behavioural issues became a focus for it and the regulatory agencies. However through to the end of the 1995 rugby season the control of liquor sales and related issues were not seen by the agencies as a priority and there was a relatively low key approach to the monitoring of sales and compliance with Sale of Liquor regulations.

In 1993 and 1994 international rugby test matches were held at Carisbrook and, as these were largely unprecedented at the time, a high level of liaison and co-operation between the regulatory agencies and other stakeholders was required to ensure their success. Although some liquor-related problems were experienced, overall these matches were considered to have gone very well.

In 1996, with the introduction of night rugby matches and a further test between the New Zealand All Blacks and Scotland at Carisbrook there were increasing problems. Comparisons made with the international matches held in 1993 and 1994 indicated that the level of communication that had existed for these events had been relaxed. Problems experienced during this period at Carisbrook included the following:

- Disorder and intoxication.
- Mis-management of liquor sales.
- ORFU, agencies and stakeholders expectations of each other were not clearly communicated.
- There was a lack of consistency in terms of liaison and controls.
- Some negative comment between stakeholders was exchanged via the news media.
- Liaison existed between the Council, Police and ORFU but did not involve other stakeholders on a regular basis.

ANALYSIS:

By mid 1996 the regulatory agencies, including the Public Health Service of HealthCare Otago, had developed a "Partnership Approach", involving community stakeholders in a number of initiatives with the goal of reducing alcohol related harm. It was therefore logical and desirable to apply this already successful approach to the problems being experienced at Carisbrook.

The agencies concluded that the problems were of a serious nature which if not addressed could be far-reaching, with negative consequences for the future of events at the venue. In

addition some community concerns were being given media coverage. The ORFU was also mindful of public perception as it needed to ensure ongoing community support for Carisbrook. Just as important was the obligation to comply with the statutory requirements which were being monitored by the regulatory agencies.

It was also of concern to the agencies that there seemed to be a level of public acceptance and tolerance of inadequate behavioural standards. This tolerance was self-perpetuating, particularly as the offenders and those affected were largely sports fans and average citizens who in a normal set of circumstances would not exhibit or tolerate inappropriate behaviour.

Because the venue is deemed to be a licensed premises under the Sale of Liquor Act 1989, the regulatory agencies sought to impose the same principles of behaviour and standards as required for any licensed premises, taking into consideration that a venue such as Carisbrook is not typical.

Carisbrook is an important part of the Otago economy and culture. In a city with a population of approximately 120,000 a venue with a capacity of 40,000 people is a significant asset. It is estimated that an international test match at Carisbrook boosts the Dunedin economy to the tune of NZ\$18 million. In addition to the almost yearly international test matches with their capacity audiences, Carisbrook is also home to the Otago Highlanders Super 12 rugby team and the Otago National Provincial Championship rugby team. Between them these teams have at least 12 home games at Carisbrook a year, of which 7 are night games. Many night games are preceded by live concerts from national or international acts, with an attendance varying between 20 - 35,000. In addition the venue is

used for national and international cricket matches. The ORFU is also pursuing the use of Carisbrook as a venue for international concerts. While a single international test match is worth at least \$18 million to Dunedin there have to date been no official studies to ascertain the value of other events at Carisbrook to the local economy but anecdotal evidence has it that the benefits are significant. There is a need not only for the ORFU but for the Dunedin and Otago community to ensure the on going viability of Carisbrook as a venue and to maintain its ability to attract significant events to Dunedin. In order to do so the stakeholders identified a need to work together to protect this asset.

RESPONSE:

It was considered appropriate to increase communication between the three agencies and other stakeholders on a regular basis rather than intermittently for rugby internationals. Consequently the Carisbrook Liaison Group met for the first time in July of 1996.

The group was to meet before and after all significant events, like the Super 12 and National Provincial Championship rugby series, international test matches, night games or other significant events, such as a semi-final or final. It would be facilitated and administered by the Dunedin City Council District Licensing Agency with meetings conducted on a briefing/de-briefing basis, a flexible agenda and with all stakeholders contributing.

Goals

1. To reduce the incidence or likelihood of alcohol related harm at sporting or other events at Carisbrook.
2. To create a safer, more comfortable environment at Carisbrook.

Objectives

- To improve communication and co-operation between the stakeholders.
- To improve standards of behaviour and compliance with the Sale of Liquor Act and other legislation.
- To improve efficiency in dealing with any issues or problems that arise.
- To assist stakeholders to carry out their roles and responsibilities more effectively.
- To create a required standard of behaviour and conduct.

Initially the Group looked at the ownership of the problems. Ownership in this context was not only the ownership of the solution but also of the cause, as it was easy to lay the blame at the door of Carisbrook patrons. Some ownership of the cause was attributed to the agencies, stakeholders and indeed the community who initially tolerated and therefore for a time perpetuated the inappropriate standards. All stakeholders recognised that they, through their tolerance, had in fact contributed to the problems and therefore set about addressing them. The Group recognised a positive change needed to be driven by the Group itself with commitment to change also needed from the community.

Community involvement was seen by the Group as being of particular significance, as the problems being caused by a few were causing a loss of enjoyment for the majority attending a match at Carisbrook. There was also the potential for the community to suffer more tangible losses, like the loss of international tests and associated economic gains to the city.

The motivations for community and stakeholder change reflected those of the agencies and the ORFU - to see Carisbrook not only continue as a successful, safe and enjoyable venue but to develop its viability and increase its contribution to Dunedin's economy and national prestige.

The formation of the Carisbrook Liaison Group had created a positive environment in which the stakeholder organisations could work more closely, developing an understanding of each others points of view, their requirements for doing their jobs efficiently and what factors contributed to the problems that each of them was encountering. With enhanced communication and the evolution of trust, the range of information and experience available to all stakeholders was widened. The group also found that the public responded positively to the expectations that were created and to the environment in which they were placed.

With all of the stakeholders working together a number of strategies have been implemented by the Carisbrook Liaison Group, including the following:

- Stricter standards for entry to the venue and monitoring at all points of entry.
- Stricter standards of behaviour expected and monitored throughout events.
- Close co-operation between police and crowd control staff.
- Greater emphasis on compliance with regulations by the liquor vendors.
- Consultation with the ORFU on redevelopment work and the promotion of Carisbrook as a venue.

The ORFU has undertaken considerable community consultation in the residential area adjacent to Carisbrook. This consultation has involved the Liaison Group and is ongoing. As a result changes have been made to ensure that impacts on the surrounding community are kept to a minimum. For example the ORFU now allocates a crowd control person to the residential area. On match day this crowd controller is responsible for patrolling the residential area and liaising with residents. This has been viewed by the nearby residents as a particularly positive step in negating any adverse impacts like vandalism, disorder and litter. The consultation has been particularly evident during the recent major upgrading of the venue.

Wider community consultation has also taken place through media communications before and after all significant events. This has resulted in feedback from sectors of the community and has been a major tool in the creation of expectations.

The sporting community is also involved as a key factor in the creation of expectations. Strategies aimed at the sporting community include consultation with all rugby clubs in the Otago area (approximately 50) prior to any significant match or series, reminding clubs of the requirements of entry to events at Carisbrook. Similar letters of reminder are also sent to transport operators who bus in large groups of rural rugby supporters to the city for a match.

Community involvement and information strategies have been a significant factor in the wider awareness of the requirements and of their acceptance and support.

When the Carisbrook Liaison Group identified its goals and objectives the key factor was regular and broad communication. This allowed the strategies to evolve, with regular fine

tuning and adjustments as necessary. As a result of this regular communication and broad input to strategies, any potential problems were identified and corrected quickly. The input of a range of stakeholders into these strategies has been a key factor in their success.

ASSESSMENT:

The approach taken by the Carisbrook Liaison Group has to date largely achieved significant community gains. While intermittent and somewhat isolated problems will always arise when you have a large number of people where excitement, emotion and alcohol are factors, generally the standard of crowd behaviour that applies at Carisbrook today is far greater than that which applied in the past and this is acknowledged by the community. Where problems do arise these can be dealt with more effectively through the existence of the Carisbrook Liaison Group.

Benefits of the intervention strategies implemented by the Carisbrook Liaison Group are as follows:

- Joint ownership of all issues, good and bad.
- Greater desire for involvement and intervention by all stakeholders.
- Shared glory when events go well.
- Shared ideas and feedback from all stakeholders.
- Greater expertise and experience around the table - the stakeholders have been able to deal more effectively with:
 - a. Ground entry
 - b. Crowd control - particularly on the terrace area

- c. Management of liquor sales
- d. Traffic and parking control

Outcomes of the strategies:

- Lower incidence of intoxication, glass and alcohol being brought into the ground.
- Fewer infringements of the liquor licensing conditions.
- Less inappropriate behaviour at events.
- Fewer police needed.
- Consultation with the ORFU on the provision of space for more food outlets during the redevelopment.

In considering the positive outcomes to date the Carisbrook Liaison Group believes that the reasons are as follows:

- Crowd control and police staff working together more effectively in a team approach.
- Enhanced communication between all stakeholders.
- Liquor vendors more vigilant.
- Creation of expectations via media and word of mouth.
- Advertising of the conditions of entry.
- What the individual experiences on arrival at Carisbrook.
- What patrons see and how they are treated.

Evaluation Survey of the Carisbrook Liaison Group

In May of 1998 the regulatory agencies evaluated the Carisbrook Liaison Group. Questionnaires were sent to representatives of the stakeholder organisations and respondents asked to indicate whether they agreed, disagreed or neither agreed nor disagreed with a number of statements relating to the goals and objectives of the group.

Findings were:

- The Group has contributed to improved crowd control and the reduction of alcohol related problems at Carisbrook. Problems that do occur can now be dealt with more effectively than previously.
- Communication and co-operation between the stakeholders is a vital component in the success of the Group. This is evidenced by a number of survey responses referring to the "team" effect and combined approach to issues and the practical aspects such as the police and crowd control staff working together in an environment of mutual respect.
- There is a clear message to avoid complacency. As the benefits of improvements in terms of the physical and behavioural standards are felt and compliance is more prevalent we must resist the urge to relax the effort and commitment that has gone into this joint project.

- The creation of expectations is an important tool in creating a safer and more comfortable drinking environment. Patrons are complying with the standards of entry and behaviour more than they did before the group existed. The benefits of a number of strategies aimed at creating expectations and setting standards are now being experienced.
- There is a need for leadership of a group such as the Carisbrook Liaison Group, with one agency responsible for ensuring that the liaison between the members actually happens. This role has been taken by the Dunedin City Council District Licensing Agency.
- The Carisbrook Liaison Group is meeting its objectives and there is a high level of satisfaction among stakeholders.
- The Carisbrook Liaison Group has become an important tool in establishing and maintaining Carisbrook as an ongoing and successful entertainment venue for Dunedin.

Communication on a National Level

The Group believed that alcohol and crowd issues at Carisbrook were being managed effectively, however there was concern at the lack of communication between sporting and concert venues and regulatory agencies nationally.

The Group therefore arranged a national conference entitled "The Management of Alcohol at Sporting Events and Outdoor Concerts", inviting Council District Licensing Agencies, Police, Health Promotion, and venue Operators to send representatives. The conference was logically based around a major sporting event at Carisbrook - the 1997 Bledisloe Cup rugby test between New Zealand and Australia.

Outcomes of this conference included the following:

- Policy/Guidelines agreed to in respect of the various components of an event:
 - i. Alcohol Management
 - ii. Crowd and Environment
 - iii. Flow-on issues
 - iv. Creating Expectations
- National criteria for the management of alcohol at events were agreed to.
- Ongoing networks were established.

The conference also provided an opportunity for a peer review of Carisbrook and the Liaison Group.

Participants praised the level of involvement of the Dunedin City Council both in the event being held at the weekend and their assistance overall in terms of support for Carisbrook. This was seen as a key factor in the success of the event and of Carisbrook generally. A number of participants have long been working to establish similar co-operation in their areas and will now use Dunedin as example of how critical this involvement is to the success of events in their city.

Conference participants were also impressed with the level of co-operation and joint participation between the various stakeholders involved at Carisbrook and identified this as a key aspect of the successful management of the event from a crowd and alcohol control perspective.

The attitude and tolerance of the community in supporting and being involved in the event and associated activities and the good natured attitude of the crowd, particularly those on the terraces, were also commented upon.

The Key Aspects of the Successful Management of an Event - The Four C's

In terms of the management of alcohol at a sporting event or outdoor concert in New Zealand the National Conference identified the following as being the key aspects:

1. Council

Involvement from the local Council is seen as vital to the success of a significant sporting event or outdoor concert. The Council support in terms of recognising the economic and social benefits of such an event happening in a city or district is paramount in creating the environment for the event to be a success for all in the community. This is more than endorsing the event - the Council should be proactive.

2. Community

Flowing on from Council participation is community involvement which should be lead or fostered by the Council. If the community gets in behind the home team in the case of a sporting event, or prepares for or supports a significant event, appreciation of the event and what it means to the community increases. Community ownership of

the event is vital to its success and the likelihood of further similar events coming to town. Community benefits, both economic and social, are significant.

3. Communication

The involvement and co-operation of all stakeholders in an event is necessary. This means all parties communicating and working together on a partnership basis, sharing the responsibility and accountability to ensure the success of the event. This involves pre and post event briefings and ongoing liaison. The local Council is the obvious agency to take a lead and co-ordinate the communication.

4. Creation of Expectations

The understanding and acceptance of the behavioural and other standards required of the public in terms of an event is perhaps the most useful tool in ensuring the ongoing success of a venue or the events occurring at it. This creation of expectations can only occur however if the other three components of Council involvement and direction, community support and communication between the stakeholders is in place and working.

Conclusion - The Benefits of the Carisbrook Liaison Group:

- Sharing of resources and responsibility.
- Community ownership and pride in the event and its success - everybody "owns" it.
- More resolution to solve problems - no finger pointing.
- Greater consistency in the application of standards.

- A pooling of ideas and solutions.
- Greater depth of experience - everyone has a useful contribution to make.
- We are achieving more, it is easier and it is enjoyed by all participants.
- It is cost effective.