



Bid to curb city's liquor louts

Call for earlier closing times

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TASMANIA has been urged to force pubs and clubs to close earlier in an effort to tackle alcohol-fuelled violence.

It comes as drunken louts face the real possibility of being banned from all of Hobart's pubs and clubs if they are caught doing the wrong thing.

The State Government is understood to be preparing to fund the publican's version of Neighbourhood Watch, called Pubwatch, as part of this month's State Budget.

Earlier this year several Hobart waterfront licensees

considered the possibility of introducing the British-based Pubwatch system.

The telephone or internet-based system enables pubs and clubs to register the name and identity of a person kicked out of a venue for anti-social or drunken behaviour.

Instead of that person being able to continue on to the next venue as can happen now, all the area's drinking holes will be alerted and entry denied.

A chain of Hobart pubs and nightclubs has run a similar system for 18 months and says it has had a significant impact on cutting violence.

Australian Hotels Associ-

ation state general manager Steve Old said the State Government had made a pre-election promise to fund the \$30,000 to establish the scheme.

"It's now just a waiting game to see if the State Government actually comes up with the goods but we are feeling positive about it," Mr Old said.

Police Association of Tasmania president Randolph Wierenga said calls by its counterparts in New South Wales to implement a three-month trial to close entertainment venues at 3am should be investigated.

In the past, former health minister Lara Giddings has

warned that reducing pub operating hours would only lead to drunken punch-ups.

"We need to be looking at a whole range of issues here like the responsible service of alcohol and really a cultural change within the drinking fraternity as well as harsher sentencing," Sergeant Wierenga said.

"Whatever action we can take to try and stop these disheartening assaults on people that really have an impact on the victim for the rest of their lives must be considered."