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Venues in the News

After VCAT made some gaping holes in their plans, the Brumby government has given up on continuing Melbourne's 2am lockout, and introduced an \$11m package to clean up the streets. This includes the expansion of the **Safer Streets** task force, adding 150 police on Friday and Saturday nights — doubling the CBD presence to over 300 policemen — as well as a 'Time-out' zone for drunks at St Paul's cathedral, manned by police and volunteers from the Salvation Army and other support groups. The Victoria Police and **Liquor Licensing Victoria (LLV)** have also been busy fining and marching a bunch of operators into VCAT to defend their liquor licenses. Almost 50 inner-city clubs - including the likes of QBH, Hi Fi Bar, The Loft and Elephant & Wheelbarrow - have received final warning notices with a dozen already booked in for a hearing. According to *The Age*, two clubs firmly in the sights of LLV's Sue Maclellan are Valve Nightclub after advertising 99c Jager shots for 10 minutes on every hour, and The Viper Room after the recent arrest of licensee Peter Sakkas for cocaine possession.

Obviously **Sydney** are hoping for better results at the tribunal with the introduction of its own 'lockout', Premier **Rees** having a go at 48 venues around NSW fingered by the Bureau of Crime Statistics & Research (BOSCAR) as being 'problem venues'. The 2am lockouts are pretty complex, and will more than likely confuse drinkers as the flow of alcohol pauses for 10 minutes every hour after midnight; service limits come into effect; double shots and RTDs with more than 5% alcohol get banned; and service fully stops half an hour before closing to give patrons time to finish off their **plastic cup** of beer.

Non-teetotaling women teetering on the edge of their high heels will be handed **Government Issue thongs** emblazoned with safe drinking messages as they stumble out of British nightclubs, according to *The Australian*. The 'flip-flop' patrol is part of a \$70,000 publicly funded scheme to prevent alcohol-related harm: i.e. tanked totty topples off high heels onto broken glass — something that would never happen in centimetre-high grippy rubber thongs.

The Van Haandel's split has been further ratified by the brothers putting up the **Prince Hotel** for sale. The hotel, co-owned by John and Frank, has been in the family for 15 years, and is being relinquished to allow the brothers to pursue their own interests. The Prince is a prime, multi-functional venue that features a 40-room, 5-star boutique hotel. Circa the Prince, the Prince public bar, Aurora spa retreat, the Prince deck, Il Fornacio Café, Mink, Prince bandroom, and a multi-level car park for 270 vehicles. Not only that, the Van Haandels already gained development approval for 24 luxury residential apartments and 12 serviced apartments on site.

DesignEx has started its countdown to next year. The exhibition will run from Thursday April 30 to Saturday May 2 at the Melbourne Convention & Exhibition Centre, with over 300 design companies expected to show their wares. Go: www.designex.info

AIME (AsiaPacific Incentives & Meetings Expo) is also on the cards for early next year, at the Melbourne Exhibition centre from 17-18 February 2009. With the weak dollar and Baz's *Australia* hitting the box office, talk is it's a good time to attract more business events. Which might be good for a few venue owners offering delegates a place to chow down and relax after a busy day of conferencing. Go: www.aime.com.au

The **Dinner in the Sky** concept has been brought to Australia, re-badged as the **Mckenna Bourbon Air Bar**. The Air Bar has been launched over Sydney's Cockatoo Island and rotates through 360 degrees during each half hour flight while punters sip on their complimentary bourbon. The Air Bar is surrounded by Mckenna City, including its own Chinatown, park, outdoor cinema and live music venue. Tickets are free, and it's due to hit Melbourne and Brisbane soon. Mckenna Air Bar: www.mckennaairbar.com.au

Keystone Hospitality has added another venue to its group. The **Sugar Mill** is set in the heart of Kings Cross, and the group's aim is to keep the local pub culture moving from seedy downtown to the place to socialise. Designed by David Hicks, the Sugar Mill will also feature a nightclub called **Kit & Kaboodle**.



Centennial Parklands Dining

Centennial Parklands Dining has been given a fresh new appearance. Set in Sydney's famous parkland, the restaurant has geared itself up to take full advantage of its position to tap into the lucrative function market.

The project was a long time in development. Initially the designers Landini Associates helped the client Trippas White Catering pitch for the right to run the venue and this was done by responding to some earlier designs for an extended café building by the architectural firm McConnel Smith & Johnson.

"The building design then evolved over the course of the project and I think MSJ have done a wonderful job," commented Mark Landini, Managing Director of Landini Associates. "There are plenty of spaces in Sydney that connect with water views, but there are few in the inner city that connects in such a tranquil manner with such wonderful garden views. And that's the thing about this venue; you are in the centre of the city but really in the centre of its best park."

The venue has three distinct areas: a new kiosk and external deck, a new café in the new modernist pavilion and a restaurant in the refurbished café. The idea was to have the restaurant and café connect yet be distinctive and different. As such a simple palette of materials was used, many borrowed from the base building. An American oak wall begins in the café space, wraps around the kitchen core and transforms into the restaurant's main feature — the impressive wine wall behind the bar.

"A big challenge in this new venue was storage space, so the wall is both functional and decorative," said Mark. "It gives the restaurant a slightly richer palette than the café where we used reflective glass behind the long bar to suck in the parkland by reflecting it. The oak wall also separates the two spaces should there be functions in each by pivoting out and closing down the space, both visually and acoustically, with a massive timber door."

The lighting scheme has been carefully considered with much of the lighting in both spaces being reflected off the ceilings, providing the most flattering effect for all the brides who will no doubt flock there to celebrate their big day. Additionally, the outdoor decks are underlit and the existing foliage and Morton Bay fig trees that surround the entrance deck are also lit, creating an atmospheric space for a pre-dinner cocktail.

While the venue is open to the public an important part of the brief was to allow the spaces to be used for functions and as such the design is as simple and visually unobtrusive as possible.

» **Centennial Parklands Dining**: Grand Drive, Centennial Park NSW

(02) 9380 8350 or www.cpdining.com.au

» **Landini Associates**: (02) 9360 3899 or www.landiniassociates.com