

1 July 2019

The Hon. Natalie Ward MLC
Committee Chair
Joint Select Committee on Sydney's night time economy

By email: NightTimeEconomy@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Ms Ward,

Submission to the *Inquiry into Sydney's night time economy*

The Alcohol Programs Team at the Public Health Advocacy Institute of WA (PHAIWA), Curtin University, welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the *Inquiry into Sydney's night time economy*. Our team is committed to reducing harms from alcohol by promoting evidence-based approaches. We have been actively involved in work to draw attention to the need for effective regulation of the availability of alcohol for a number of years.

Alcohol-related violence is an important public health issue of major community concern. Independent market research commissioned by our team showed that 96% of Australians were concerned about alcohol-related violence in July 2015.¹

This review process provides the NSW Government with an important opportunity to ensure that Sydney's night time economy is safe for all to enjoy. We believe that this would be achieved by retaining the effective and lifesaving late-night measures. There is overwhelming evidence that these comprehensive reforms have reduced alcohol harm in Sydney, and had positive impacts on the diversification and growth of Sydney's night time economy.

We would like to register the support of the PHAIWA Alcohol Programs Team for the submission of the NSW/ACT Alcohol Policy Alliance (NAAPA) to the current inquiry. NAAPA is a coalition of 48 organisations working to reduce alcohol harm by ensuring that evidence-based solutions inform alcohol policy discussions in NSW and the ACT. We particularly support NAAPA's recommendation for the retention of the alcohol harm reduction policies that were introduced in Sydney in February 2014 to prevent violence following the tragic and unnecessary deaths of young people in night time entertainment districts.

We wish to draw your attention to the significant changes in alcohol-related harm that the measures have been credited with following their introduction:

¹ Independent market research commissioned by the McCusker Centre for Action on Alcohol and Youth, July 2015. Available from: www.alcohol.phaiwa.org.au.



- Significant reductions in non-domestic violence, with substantial reductions observed in the entertainment precincts.^{2,3}
- Significant reduction in the number of alcohol-related serious injury and trauma presentations to the emergency department of the St Vincent's Hospital in Darlinghurst.⁴
- 60 per cent reduction in serious facial injuries requiring surgery at St Vincent's Hospital in the two years following their introduction.⁵

The main conditions in the suite of measures designed to reduce alcohol harm are 3am last drinks and a 1.30am one-way door policy. These policies have been subject to a number of government and academic studies and reviews, and the evidence overwhelmingly shows their effectiveness, with significant reductions in harm following the introduction of these measures, including on alcohol-related non-domestic violence, hospital admissions and emergency department presentations, and significantly improved local amenity.^{4,6,7,8} Maintaining the reform measures will be essential in order to maintain these reductions in alcohol-related violence and improved community safety. Any recommendations to change the existing reforms must be carefully assessed for their potential to weaken the measures currently in place or increase the availability of alcohol. Any relaxation of the reforms would be a backwards step that seriously risks achievements to date.

We appreciate that in addition to the evidence on the effectiveness of the measures, the Committee will consider ways of ensuring the existing regulatory arrangements in Sydney remain appropriately balanced. Given the above evidence that the measures have contributed to a safer night time economy, we believe that their implementation was fair and balanced. There is also evidence that the measures have promoted greater diversification in the night time economy in Sydney by encouraging substantial growth in the number of entertainment establishments since 2013.⁹

To help promote inclusivity, the night time economy should not solely focus on the consumption of alcohol. Findings from a report by Deloitte on Sydney's night time economy, *ImagineSydney*, highlight the importance of a night time economy that is not just focussed on drinking and instead one that encourages initiatives such as late night gallery and museum hours, live music or comedy, food, and other retail offerings.¹⁰ We believe that a city that is dependent on the sale of alcohol past

² Menéndez, P., Kypri, K., & Weatherburn, D. (2017). The effect of liquor licensing restrictions on assault: a quasi-experimental study in Sydney, Australia. *Addiction*, 112(2), 261-268.

³ NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (2016 June 8). Lockouts and Last Drinks. Sydney: NSW BOCSAR. Available from: https://www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au/Pages/bocsar_news/Lockouts-Forthcoming-Research.aspx

⁴ Fulde, G. W., Smith, M., & Forster, S. L. (2015). Presentations with alcohol-related serious injury to a major Sydney trauma hospital after 2014 changes to liquor laws. *Medical journal of Australia*, 203(9), 366.

⁵ Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (2016). Massive drop in facial fractures and single punch attacks in Sydney CBD and Kings Cross. Media release – 5 May 2016. Available from: <https://www.surgeons.org/media/24111976/2016-05-05-med-thursday-racs-asc-massive-drop-in-facial-fractures-and-single-punch-attacks-in-cbd-and-kings-cross.pdf>

⁶ Horton, J. (2018). Review of liquor licence conditions in the Newcastle Central Business District and surrounding areas. Report to the NSW Independent Liquor and Gaming Authority. Sydney.

⁷ Donnelly, N; Poynton, S and Weatherburn, D; New South Wales. (2017) Effect of lockout and last drinks laws on non-domestic assaults in Sydney: An update to September 2016. Sydney: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, 2017. 12 p. Crime and justice bulletin: contemporary issues in crime and justice: ISSN:1030-1046; no. 201. ISBN 9781925343304.

⁸ Kypri, K., McElduff, P. & Miller, P. (2014). Restrictions in pub closing times and lockouts in Newcastle, Australia five years on. *Drug and Alcohol Review* 33(3): 323–6.

⁹ License, A., Edwards, A * Bevan T. (2018). Measuring the Australian Night Time Economy 2016-2017. Prepared by Ingenium Research for the Council of Capital City Lord Mayors. Melbourne: Australia.

¹⁰ Deloitte. (2019). *ImagineSydney*. Accessed 13 June 2019 http://images.content.deloitte.com.au/Web/DELOITTEAUSTRALIA/%7B725ffb22-cab6-47f4-9958-37305087ba5e%7D_20190211-cit-imagine-sydney-play-report.pdf.

3am is not a healthy or sustainable city. The violence associated with heavy drinking actively discourages many people from enjoying the more diverse night time economy that Sydney needs to continue to develop to be a modern, global city. We encourage the Committee to consider the role of alternative activities to alcohol consumption in the creation of a safe and healthy night time economy in Sydney.

In summary, the suite of alcohol harm reduction policies in Sydney's CBD and Kings Cross are paramount to striking the balance and promoting diverse night time offerings. The policies save lives and must be retained. We appreciate that the Committee will receive a range of views representing different interests through this consultation process. In considering the submissions, we urge the Committee to consider the significant impact of alcohol harms on the community and on government resources directed toward ambulances, emergency departments, hospitals, policing and the justice system. While we support a vibrant community with diverse and appealing entertainment options, it is essential that the focus on reducing alcohol-related violence and improving community safety is maintained, and that community health and safety is prioritised over commercial interests.

Thank you for the opportunity to raise these important issues with you. Should you wish to clarify any matters raised in this submission, please contact the Alcohol Programs Team at the Public Health Advocacy Institute of WA on (08) 9266 9079.

Yours sincerely,

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