

23 January 2018

Chairperson
Independent Liquor and Gaming Authority
Liquor & Gaming NSW
GPO Box 7060
Sydney NSW 2001
newcastle.review@ilga.nsw.gov.au

Review of liquor license conditions for 14 Newcastle CBD venues and other matters

Dear Mr Crawford

Please find following our submission to the above review.

We strongly support the retention of the current package of license conditions commonly referred to as the s104 Newcastle Conditions. We believe that any review of the same conditions should be conducted by ILGA in an open and transparent manner under the same legal provisions (conference) by which they originated.

We also want to be clear in our support of Superintendent John Gralton's appeal (Newcastle Herald, November 22, 2017) to preserve the integrity of the package of conditions and further, we strongly endorse his proposal to go even further and reduce late trade.

As residents of Newcastle for the last 2 years (prior to that we lived in Lake Macquarie) who live in close proximity to the Grand Hotel, the Newcastle Servicemen's Club, the Newcastle Club, and 48 Watt Street, we feel compelled to have input to this decision. We are aware of the alcohol related violence that routinely occurred prior to March 2008. At this time two of our children were 22 and 20 respectively. It had reached the stage where they would no longer go out in Newcastle as it had proven too dangerous. In 2007, a good friend of my son was struck from behind in King Street with absolutely no provocation, by an unknown assailant who was drunk and abusive and fled the scene immediately. My son's friend woke in the emergency department of the hospital, thankfully with no lasting injuries, but stitches, a very bad headache and no memory of the entire evening. Our daughter had not ventured into any of the nightclubs or alcoholic venues in Newcastle for several years after an incident in which a close friend had had her drink spiked by a rowdy drunk group of young men in a nightclub. Newcastle had a reputation as an unsafe, violent and very unpredictable destination of an evening.

Both of our two oldest children currently reside overseas but on their recent visits home have expressed pleasant surprise at the change in the Newcastle vibe - they have actually enjoyed nights out in smaller bars such as Bar Petite, The Reserve etc. where they can meet friends, enjoy their evening and walk home afterwards unthreatened by violent, drunk individuals.

It's clear that even with a demonstrable drop in the rate of non-domestic assaults in our CBD, that rate is still well above the NSW average with many of the incidents alcohol related. We are therefore strongly opposed to any increase in availability of alcohol (trading hours) and drink strengths for all licensed premises including those with standard trading hours - we cannot see as valid the submission from the AHA reporting losses of revenue for liquor licensed outlets - as residents of Newcastle we are of the view that the large, loud, alcohol soaked, poker machine filled venues do not have a place in a community that wishes to promote the "revitalization of Newcastle". Council informed us that their "vision is an activated city centre and waterfront that attracts people, new enterprises and tourism." How is this achieved by returning us to the old days of routine alcohol-fuelled violence? Council also informed us that "Over time, we see great opportunities to build on the strengths of the city centre to encourage innovative and enterprising industries to thrive." Venues which rely strongly on the high consumption of alcohol for their profit are not what we would regard as "innovative and enterprising industries". If the emphasis on the sale of alcohol to gain high profits were removed, perhaps those industries would then be forced to be "innovative and enterprising industries to thrive" by other means. And we fail to see how "Newcastle's position on the regional, national and international stage" would be "strengthened" by more media coverage similar to that we experienced pre 2008, of victims of coward punches by drunken revellers.

In our view, the financial argument quoting loss of revenue for the larger licensed locations is not a compelling one stacked against the safety of our children. Who is more worthy of being looked after - our society or those who would profit from the sale of alcohol.

An increase in alcohol availability is highly likely to result in increased alcohol related violence, related crimes including malicious damage, sexual assaults, disorderly conduct and a reduction in local amenity/quiet and good order of our neighbourhood. As local residents, we are therefore opposed to any dilution of our package of Newcastle conditions which has displayed proven success in reducing alcohol related anti-social behaviours.

Yours sincerely,

Keran and Roger Davis