

Dr Anousha Victoire
Forensic Examiner and GP
Medical Lead, Newcastle Sexual Assault Service
Mob: 0434 482 260

Wednesday 7th Feb 2018

Mr Jonathon Horton QC
NSW Independent Liquor and Gaming Authority
PO Box 8325
Parramatta Westfield NSW 2150

Dear Mr Horton,

Re: Newcastle Review of CBD licence conditions

I am writing regarding the review of the Newcastle CBD liquor licence conditions. In my work as Medical Lead for the Newcastle Sexual Assault Service, I regularly provide forensic and medical care to victims of sexual assault in Newcastle. Our team of counsellors and doctors regularly see the impacts of excessive alcohol consumption on both the vulnerability of our patients to sexual assault and also on the opportunity and motivation of perpetrators to commit a sexual assault. We are concerned that a relaxing of the CBD licencing conditions would be a step backwards for public safety in Newcastle.

There is no question that the most common drug chosen by perpetrators of sexual assault to facilitate assault is alcohol, and that alcohol is a factor in a significant number of the cases we see.

Research data and Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR) data on sexual assault cases reported to police are difficult to relate specifically to the Newcastle CBD liquor licence conditions area. This is due to a concurrent increase in reports of historical sexual assaults and acute sexual assaults with increased awareness after recent Royal Commissions and greater media coverage, and the fact that not all sexual assaults will take place in the locales where alcohol was consumed or drinks were spiked (the perpetrators will often take the victim to their home or a hotel). However, anecdotally, our clinicians have noticed a shift away from the CBD area as a focus for drug and alcohol facilitated sexual assault and a decline in the number of stranger assaults occurring after a night out in Newcastle compared to previous to the change in licencing laws. Note that not all of our patients will report the sexual assault to police so the recorded crime statistics may not accurately reflect the incidence of assaults.

I am confident that a relaxation of the licencing conditions will promote increased consumption of alcohol and movement of inebriated and vulnerable individuals around the CBD, with the resultant impacts on sexual violence. The current sexual assault rate in Newcastle is quite high compared to the state average, with 106.5 cases per 100,000 population (compared to a NSW rate of 73.4 per 100,000)ⁱ. This should be taken into account when considering the public health and safety impacts of a change in the licencing conditions which currently are reasonable and no impediment to an enjoyable night out in the city. The city has changed from having a mall that women were afraid to walk down at night for fear of being assaulted to having a vibrant night life with greater personal safety. I urge you to consider the impact of alcohol on sexual violence in this review.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anousha', written in a cursive style.

Dr Anousha Victoire (FRACGP)

ⁱ <http://crimetool.bocsar.nsw.gov.au/bocsar/>