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Submission to the review of alcohol

GA

Glenda Amos To: Liquor Law Review; 

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Sun 3/04

Inbox



Action Items



I am writing this submission to the NSW Government to urge them to keep the alcohol laws in place in the greater Sydney CBD.

The reason for my submission is that I have seen the harm that alcohol does to our community and the cost that is incurred in the area of policing, medical care and the huge emotional cost that is born by the victims of alcohol-related tragedies and the ongoing effects on the next generation. This is a cost overall to the community as well, in terms of persons who are needing support from Centrelink services due to the breakup of the home and the high cost of childcare because single parents are forced to put their children in care because as victims of domestic violence from alcohol-related events they must support their families. I have personally experienced this as I have supported families who were broken apart by alcohol-related domestic violence. The actual cost of this trauma cannot be fully calculated as it impacts the next generation with ongoing consequences which are beyond calculation. I believe that by restricting the times of availability we can in a small way aid in reducing that cost.

I live in the Newcastle area and have seen the effects that these laws have had in Newcastle and believe that this is by far the better approach to take. Alcohol related violence plummeted by 37 per cent within the 18 months of the controls being introduced, and is on a sustained downward trend. It's estimated that around 5,000 young people have been saved from being assaulted since 2008. (Grog Watch - Newcastle Model: Are the critics correct? August 11, 2015) According to Mr Tony Brown, who spearheaded the initiatives and lives in the inner Newcastle city area, in the eight years since it has been established, the city's night-time economy has improved. It is now, a safe place people want to venture out for a drink. "It has totally transformed the Newcastle nightlife," he said.

"In surveying the community, they have said there is much improved safety, more diversity of venues and more inclusiveness. Not only that it has led to a much, much more prosperous night time economy. There has been a 100 per cent increase in the number of licensed premises, which has led to more jobs." (January 10, 2016 - Kim Stephens, Brisbane Times) The statistics from Newcastle speak for themselves Prior to the introduction of the alcohol laws, our right to walk down the street without being assaulted was being attacked.

People can still drink until 3am in the greater Sydney CBD area. This isn't about restricting people's right to enjoy life; it's about giving people the right to do so without their lives being put at risk. While I personally believe that drinking alcohol is not necessary to having a good time, I also believe that for people to maintain the right to drink they need to abide by boundaries that are put in place to ensure that all are kept as safe as possible. We put

restrictions around the right to drive but no-one makes the claim that we are a "nanny state" for so doing.

It is perfectly reasonable to make sure that citizens are kept safe by limiting the access to a substance to certain hours and conditions, when the use of the substance is causing widespread harm and cost.

This has the ongoing effect of releasing our emergency services to do the work they should do in dealing with medical emergencies that are not alcohol-induced.

In regard to the cry from the alcohol industry that their businesses are suffering and this is effecting the economy, I would ask, "Should we condone practices which bring harm, kill, and destroy people's lives in order to make a profit?" We would bring to justice people who did this, so why pander to an industry which is contributing in this way. If we have the mind-set that fun can only be had if alcohol is available, then we close our minds to alternative methods and practices that would make our lives more balanced and enjoyable. I

Our good reputation is not at risk internationally, by having these laws. What kind of a reputation do we want to have? One where the international community thinks of Sydney as a place to party, get blind drunk and killed, or one where people may walk the streets without fear of being punched out and where you can still have a good time.

Personally I have never drunk alcohol in my life but I have enjoyed a life of fun, fellowship and good times and I actually remember the times I have had. It is possible to enjoy life without alcohol. That doesn't mean that I believe in stopping others from having their own choice in drinking, but it needs to be done in such a way that other people are not endangered by it. The Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research has reported assaults have fallen by 45% in Kings Cross and by 20% in the Sydney CBD. Dr Gordian Fulde was celebrated as Senior Australian of the Year and is the director of Emergency Services at St Vincent's Hospital in Sydney. Fulde compared the nature of admissions to the Emergency Room at St Vincent's for 12 months preceding the 2014 licensing reforms and for the subsequent 12 months. Prior to the reform 4.9% of serious injury cases in Emergency (n=318) were alcohol related compared to 3.7% (n=246) after the reform. That represents 72 fewer bodies in the emergency room as well as being a statistically significant reduction. Dr Tony Sara of St Vincent's Hospital said since the alcohol reform package, assault cases have dropped by 32%, there has been no deaths from alcohol-related violence, and only three patients admitted to intensive care for alcohol-related violence, whereas prior "it was scores every year." (Grog Watch - How many lives is a nightclub worth? - February 16, 2016)

As both Newcastle and Sydney statistics show improvement with the current laws, so why should we change back? That just doesn't make sense. The licensing reform in NSW doesn't remove people's 'right' to drink alcohol late at night, but it does keep people alive and saves untold heartache and anguish. Please keep these modest laws in place and help to curb a negative reputation that was getting out of hand and detrimental to our international image and instead allow our reputation to be one of responsibility and safe practice which looks out for people's lives instead of profiting from their destruction.

Yours sincerely,

Glenda Amos

Treasurer & Director for Children's Work - WCTU Australia Ltd

Regards,

Glenda Amos

Community supporter

