



1 April 2016

Hon. Ian Callinan AC QC
Liquor Law Review
GPO Box 7060
Sydney NSW 2001
liquorlawreview@justice.nsw.gov.au

Dear Justice Callinan,

Thank you for the opportunity to present our submission to the Independent Review of the Liquor Law Reforms in New South Wales.

For emergency service workers such as doctors, nurses, paramedics and police officers – the people on the front-line of dealing with aggressive people who have had too much to drink – alcohol-fuelled violence is a constant occupational hazard. That's why four major organisations representing emergency service workers in NSW (the Police Association of NSW, the Health Services Union NSW, the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association and the Australian Salaried Medical Officers' Federation NSW) banded together in 2008 to form the Last Drinks coalition. The campaign is seeking to tackle the issue of alcohol-fuelled violence head-on, by challenging the 24/7 drinking culture that has permeated modern Australian society.

The Last Drinks coalition believes strongly in evidence-based policy solutions, which is why we strongly support the current measures in place in the greater Sydney CBD.

The evidence shows that the most effective way to reduce alcohol-fuelled violence in the Australian context is by placing restrictions on the late night sale of alcohol, similar to those restrictions currently in place in Newcastle and in the greater Sydney CBD.

Research has found that since the last drinks and lock out measures were introduced in the greater Sydney CBD in early 2014 there has been a 45.1 per cent reduction in non-domestic assaults in the Kings Cross precinct and a 20.3 per cent reduction in non-domestic assaults in the Sydney CBD entertainment precincts,ⁱ with no significant change in areas adjacent or alternative entertainment precincts in Sydney. Positive changes have also been seen at St Vincent's Hospital with a 24.8 per cent reduction of seriously injured patients during high alcohol times.ⁱⁱ

These dramatic decreases in alcohol-related incidents mirror what we've seen in Newcastle since similar modest measures were introduced there.

Even putting the overwhelming statistics aside, local emergency service workers have anecdotally noticed a real difference the alcohol-violence laws have made to the city. Local police report significantly fewer assaults – on themselves and innocent community

members; paramedics are called to the area less often and are dealing with less violent altercations; and nurses and doctors are dealing with fewer injuries and assaults to workers and patients as a result of alcohol-related harm.

The benefit of this decrease in alcohol-fuelled violence from an emergency service personnel perspective cannot be underestimated. Prior to the introduction of the modest alcohol laws in Sydney, emergency service workers were at breaking point, having to deal with constant and extreme levels of alcohol-fuelled violence.

Sydney's emergency service workers have seen many attempts to quell alcohol-fuelled violence over the years, particularly in areas like Kings Cross. We've seen massive police operations in areas like Kings Cross; increased responsible service of alcohol inspectors; education campaigns; CCTV cameras – all important, long-term measures, but none of which made the difference to alcohol-fuelled violence we needed to see. The only thing that has made a marked difference is the current, modest measures.

Emergency service workers are on the frontline of alcohol-fuelled violence. We are the ones who get physically and verbally attacked by those who have had too much to drink; we are charged with attempting to save the lives of people who have fallen victim to violence; and we are given the horrific task of telling families their loved one won't be coming home when medical intervention can't save them. Thankfully, these horrific tasks are now undertaken less often as a result of the current alcohol measures.

We cannot afford to allow Sydney to go back to the days when our streets the scenes of alcohol-fuelled attacks every single weekend. For this reason, the Last Drinks coalition makes the following recommendations to this review:

1. Keep the current alcohol-fuelled violence reduction measures in place in the greater Sydney CBD

2. Extend the measures to all venues in NSW. The measures have been proven to work in the greater Sydney CBD, so it is important other communities can now benefit from the decrease in alcohol-fuelled violence.

Thank you again for the opportunity to put forward our submission to this review.

Please feel to contact us anytime to discuss this submission further.

The Last Drinks coalition

The NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association
The Australian Salaried Medical Officers' Federation NSW
The Health Service Union NSW
The Police Association of NSW

ⁱ NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research. (2016). Lockouts and Last Drinks – Forthcoming Findings. Retrieved from: http://www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au/Pages/bocsar_news/Lockouts-Forthcoming-Research.aspx

ⁱⁱ 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 (MJA)*, 203(9). Retrieved from: <https://www.mja.com.au/journal/2015/203/9/presentations-alcohol-related-serious-injury-major-sydney-trauma-hospital-after%20%20>