

INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF THE IMPACT OF LIQUOR LAW REFORMS

1 April 2016

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Independent Review of the Impact of Liquor Law Reforms in New South Wales (NSW).

I am a senior emergency physician who has worked in the public health system for almost 30 years. I have been employed as an emergency physician at a major trauma centre (Liverpool Hospital for 13 years) and now work at Canterbury Hospital in Sydney. I am writing to you because I have seen firsthand the harms caused by alcohol in the emergency department.

This submission relates to my experience as a health professional both before and after the introduction of the Liquor Law Reforms of 2014.

I have seen on very many occasions how alcohol, in excess, often leads to a variety of avoidable and often tragic consequences. I have witnessed the first hand effects of alcohol fuelled violence: the tragic consequences not only for the individual harmed but so often, also on the innocent bystanders or families having to deal with the grief that comes with life threatening injuries or death.

I have also seen on too many occasions the tragic results of alcohol related road trauma. It principally but not exclusively of course, effects the younger people of our society. It impacts on those directly affected and it impacts indirectly on us all through the resource drain associated with such violence and the frustrating inability to deal with other people in the emergency department who present with all kinds of illness but who needlessly wait whilst we deal with the more urgent, life threatening alcohol related presentations.

I believe our society needs a fundamental shift in its relationship with alcohol. I too enjoy a drink on social occasions but the ready availability of alcohol at all hours of the night and the obvious inability of licensed premises to successfully self-regulate responsible serving of alcohol to me means the state must play its part on ensuring the wellbeing and safety of all its citizens.

These laws have had a significant impact on reducing the numbers who are presenting with alcohol fuelled violence in the early hours of the morning. My colleagues, whose EDs are directly in the catchment area of the impact of these laws tell us of the positive impact. I know enough of alcohol violence to share in their joy and enthusiasm for what has been a highly effective means of finally reducing the upward trend in people (principally very young) who present as victims of alcohol related trauma and the grief and horror that comes with it.

I urge you to recommend to the NSW Government that they continue these measures.

Yours sincerely
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