

**Submission  
No 56**

## **MEASURES TO REDUCE ALCOHOL AND DRUG- RELATED VIOLENCE**

**Name:** Ms Rebecca Wright  
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15 August 2014

Attention: Carly Maxwell,  
Committee Manager  
Committee on Law and Safety

Dear Ms Maxwell and fellow committee members,

**Re: Inquiry into measures to reduce alcohol and drug-related violence**

As a long-term local resident I have been personally affected by the industrial- strength alcohol culture of Kings Cross over many years.

I Thank you for this opportunity to comment and submit those in points form as follows:

- 1. Point of departure should not be whether to relax and retreat but, rather, to continue and extend restrictions across the state. Otherwise, state government is prone to accusations of bias towards certain licensees AND against certain residential districts. And given recent ICAC findings relating to both major parties, continuing favouritism towards the alcohol lobbyists will not enhance their positions.**
- 2. Bad look for Sydney. If Premier Baird thinks Pymont and the Fish Markets area looks “ugly”, with plans for an upgrade, what of Darlinghurst Road and surrounds? It does not get any uglier than this! What truly cosmopolitan and international city has an area the quality of ‘Kings Cross’, right smack dab on the front of its ‘face’, as if to proudly show it off?! The premier should visit this area and see for himself.**
- 3. Benefits of reduced alcohol-related injuries and admissions to hospital, especially on weekend nights, is concrete proof enough for justification of point #1 and no further rationale is really required.**
- 4. We must await 2 year crime figures from BOSCAR but obviously crime has been reduced in Kings Cross since the changes were initiated and cannot be ignored even in this early stage of assessment.**
- 5. Doubtless the AHA and others in the alcohol industry will continue to claim the ‘transport’ issue as being a crucial factor, just as they have repeatedly stated that neither of the two tragic deaths from “coward punches” occurred in the late night or early morning hours, by way of justifying not having trading hours limited.**

On the basis the timing of those manslaughters, one could argue that even further restrictions on trading hours are justified!

Regarding transport out of Kings Cross, neither of the two perpetrators who administered those deadly 'coward punches' were looking for transport home at the time.

Problems in an area like Kings Cross are not due to anything so straightforward as inadequate policing and/ or adequate transport. It is a given, that there is a logarithmic increase in violence and unsociable behaviour when any such huge number of patrons are convened – for any reason – especially, in too small a locale such as Kings Cross. It is a recipe for disaster, as we have seen, and forced a “tipping point”.

6. The irony in Kings Cross is that it evolved into its unmanageable state just prior to the 2000 Olympics and continued its malignant growth post-Olympics while simultaneously evolving into a most densely-populated residential district. Large numbers of hotels were converted to units and many new blocks of units were built and continue to be developed.

The sheer number of licensed premises in Kings Cross on its own is not sustainable, let alone in such a residential district. Added to that, have been the unrestricted – up to 24/7 – trading hours for many licensed premises.

This is not a case of 'nimbyism' but, rather 'niAbyism' . That is, what Kings Cross has been allowed to become should not happen in anyone's backyard!

7. All culture is “organic” and, therefore, changes. Just as all built structures are not worth preserving, neither is every facet of social “culture” (and I use that term advisedly in this context). Kings Cross has evolved into the cultural exponent of all the worst features of society. It became not only ugly and embarrassing, but also dangerous, deadly and very costly. It is an ideal example of ‘the whole being much greater than the sum of its parts’.
8. The cries by the alcohol industry about loss of jobs ring hollow in the broader context of the community needs and costs and even in the broader range of the jobs sector as a whole. Of course, jobs should be preserved. However, the alcohol industry as it is in such a context as Kings Cross is too costly and dangerous. We exist in an era of rapid and continual change and jobs are not immune. Besides the hospitality industry is a broader one than simply that focused on alcohol. Any jobs lost due to the current, albeit restrained restrictions, can surely be absorbed into other areas such as restaurants or other hospitality and tourism-related industries.

Furthermore, the jobs losses for which the alcohol lobby feign such concern must certainly have resulted in a concomitant decrease in the budget for wages in these establishments whose trading hours have been restricted or simply due to procedures initiated for the safety and security of all concerned and affected.

The State and Council support that an “entertainment precinct” such as KX and the alcohol industry in general has historically enjoyed is quite ironic. That is, alcohol plays such a large role in our culture it hardly needs special attention for its marketing. The reality is that you could sell it anywhere, anytime. It is right up there with oxygen, water and food as an essential item. And I do not say that as a wowser!

Finally, the jobs sector is too always changing. Witness the jobs losses in so many other industries; automobile manufacturing, appliance manufacturing, canning industry and not to mention all those increasingly lost due to our electronic world. There is nothing sacred about the jobs in the alcohol industry. It too must simply adapt as has already happened with some licensed premises in Kings Cross.

9. Something had to give and it did but it could have been prevented with prudent governance which has NOT prevailed for too long. All credit to Mr O’Farrell for making the changes which have resulted in benefits so far. However, these are timid changes overall and should be extended rather than reversed.

In fact, to reverse them would be analogous to a patient who ceases his blood pressure medication because his blood pressure is down or stops his insulin because his blood sugar is within the acceptable range. Astounding lack of logic.

10. NSW government and COS have for too long been blindsided about the shortcomings of Kings Cross as a tourist destination. Seriously, is this the look we want to ‘publish’ for our beautiful city and this state?! Nothing against backpackers but how much disposable income do they actually have relative to other tourists to pump into the state economy?

11. The other excuse for not interfering with the untouchable alcohol industry is that any problems can only really be dealt with via education. Who could argue that? Absolutely true. However, government at any level cannot adopt that position while simultaneously supporting areas like Kings Cross. They represent, especially in the minds of the most vulnerable young people, a no-holds-barred area where you go to deliberately engage in excess alcohol consumption and all that goes with it, seemingly with impunity. Just check all personal and social responsibility at the Coca-Cola sign, not unlike checking your coat at the door. The very best way for Council and state government to achieve a change in attitude about alcohol consumption is to DIScourage areas of industrial strength drinking such as Kings Cross.

12. Finally, one of the most important reasons for reining in and downsizing the model of Kings Cross relates to a much bigger security issue. With increasing concerns about a terrorist attack in Australia, such a place as Kings would be too tempting for any terrorist. Kings Cross’ culture of industrial strength drinking and drugs is unacceptable to many non-Islamists. KX rather

**represents everything which such extremists find reprehensible and evil about Western society and culture with the excess (or any!) alcohol, illegal drugs; you name it.**

**The state government would be irresponsible to encourage and support the previous KX formula which attracts an unmanageable amount of mostly drunken patrons on any weekend night; a prime target for a terrorist attack, just as was the Bali nightclub catastrophe.**