

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

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Introduction

We welcome the opportunity to submit to the Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety Inquiry into Measures to Reduce Alcohol and Drug-Related Violence.

The Drug Policy Modelling Program (DPMP) is a dedicated research program that seeks to improve Australian drug and alcohol policy. It addresses drug policy research in the following areas: (1) Building an evidence base to improve policy decision making; (2) Translating research into information of relevance and utility for decision makers; (3) Studying policy processes.

We are encouraged that the New South Wales Government is attempting to assess the impacts of the recent measures introduced in Sydney on violence. The suite of policy changes implemented in central Sydney (and, in the case of the restrictions on packaged trading hours, across New South Wales) represent some of the most significant alcohol policy interventions to have taken place in Australia in recent years and have the potential to substantially influence policy decisions around Australia and internationally. With this in mind, the DPMP believes that a thorough, independent evaluation of the effectiveness of the measures implemented is critical. The focus of our submission is thus on the kinds of data and research methods necessary to undertake such an evaluation.

Existing data

There are a range of existing administrative data sources that provide opportunities to assess the impact of the February policy changes. These administrative data sources provide important data from the years leading up to the policy intervention, allowing for analyses of the overall impacts of the policy changes on rates of assault and injury. Analyses using existing data sources should:

- Take into account the long-term trends in rates of harm to isolate the specific effects of the policy interventions
- Explore the potential for displacement of harms geographically, spatially, and across substances or crimes. Geographical displacement can be examined by comparing rates in the intervention areas with those in similar, neighbouring areas (e.g. Pyrmont, Newtown etc). Spatial displacement can be examined by comparing rates across premise types (e.g. licensed premises, public transport, residential premises – particularly to see if there is a displacement from harm in public to private arenas).¹ Substance displacement can be examined by comparing prevalence and frequency of use of alcohol, illicit (including cannabis, amphetamines), and steroids.
- Consider both violence and other relevant outcomes (e.g. public order offences, offences against justice procedures, other injuries)

¹ Liang, W. & Chikritzhs, T. (2011). Revealing the link between licensed outlets and violence: Counting venues versus measuring alcohol availability. *dar_281 524 Drug and Alcohol Review*, 30, 524–535.

- Where possible (e.g. in police and ambulance data), disaggregate harms by time, to explore how any impacts of the policy interventions are spread over the night (e.g. to assess the relative impact of the lockout and the last drinks restrictions)

Police data is obviously critical to measuring the impacts of the policy changes. New South Wales Police service and the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research collect detailed data on crime recorded by police. These data include assaults (by type: particularly non-domestic violence related vs domestic-violence related), assaults on licensed premises, other acts intending to cause injury, disorderly conduct offences, offences against justice procedures and can be disaggregated by location, premise type, day of week and time of day, providing long time-series of key indicators.² Other relevant data include demographics of the persons of interest (gender and age). New South Wales police data includes a measure of alcohol involvement in offences, but analyses should be conducted on both total offence rates and alcohol-involved offence rates to explore the possibility of changes in attention to recording alcohol involvement.

Police data on number and nature of offences involving supply and use/possession of illicit drugs and steroids are also relevant: particularly in the Kings Cross area. That said, some of the new measures (particularly use of drug detection dogs) may increase the likelihood of police *detection* for drug offences.³ This makes it important to triangulate police data against prevalence data (see for example DUMA data below) to distinguish if any change is attributable to change in detection or use.

NSW data on court and corrections is also important to examine the burden on the courts and prisons (i.e. whether courts and prisons are being less utilised post the measures) and any change in the seriousness of the offences committed. Specific data of interest include:

- Number of people being sent to court for assault (by type and location), other acts intending to cause injury, public order offences (disorderly conduct, regulated public order offences, offensive conduct), by type of court.
- Sentence outcomes, including numbers convicted, numbers imprisoned, length of imprisonment.

Any evaluation should avoid relying entirely on police, court or correctional data. Recorded crime is influenced by a range of factors beyond incidence of crime (e.g. reporting, policing practices^{4,5}) and should be supplemented by other relevant data sources. In New South Wales, these include:

- *Emergency department presentation data:* Emergency Department (ED) data provide a relatively reliable means of measuring rates of violence and injury. ED data lack the geographical specificity of police data (i.e. there is no record of where injuries occur), however rates of late-night weekend presentations at major inner-city EDs can be compared with rates at EDs unlikely to be affected by the CBD and Kings Cross intervention. ED data on assault-related injuries and on all injuries should be analysed. The ED data will not be useful for assessing displacement of harms to neighbouring areas, but will provide robust evidence on whether the policies implemented have achieved their overarching goal, a reduction in harms.
- *Ambulance data:* Ambulance data are unique in the health system for their geographic specificity (i.e. ambulances typically attend the location where the injury occurred). Rates of late-night ambulance attendances in the intervention area and neighbouring areas would provide a good complement to police data.
- *Hospital admission data:* Hospital admissions data provide the most reliable coding of violence in the health system and allow for the separation of domestic and non-domestic assaults (including more detailed categories such as assaults by a stranger). Hospital data also reflect the most serious violence, requiring admission to hospital.

² Briscoe, S. & Donnelly, N. (2001) Temporal and regional aspects of alcohol-related violence and disorder, Sydney: BOCSAR.

³ Jezierskia, T., Adamkiewicz, E., Walczaka, M., Sobczyńska, M., Górecka-Bruzda, A., Ensminger, J., & Papet, E. (2014). Efficacy of drug detection by fully-trained police dogs varies by breed, training level, type of drug and search environment. *Forensic Science International*, 237, 112–118.

⁴ L. Breri, C. (2003) *Evaluating Differences in Recorded Crime Statistics*. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology.

⁵ Coleman, C and Moynihan, J (1996) *Understanding crime data: Haunted by the dark figure*, Vol. 120: Open University Press Buckingham.

However, hospital data are not temporally or spatially specific, meaning any effects may be small. As with the ED analyses, a comparison of inner city hospitals and those unlikely to be admitting injured patients from the CBD would provide some measure of the overall effects of the policy changes.

- *Sydney City activity data*: The City of Sydney conducts regular studies of the night-time economy⁶, measuring pedestrian and street activity (including observations of anti-social behaviour) and intercept interviews with people active in the night-time economy. These data (collected in 2010 and 2012) provide critical baseline data to measure the impacts of the recent measures on the ways that people engage with the night-time economy in Sydney. Importantly, the data already collected cover both intervention and non-intervention areas, meaning displacement effects can be assessed.
- *Drug Use Monitoring in Australia (DUMA) data*: DUMA data is collected by the Australian Institute of Criminology and measures the prevalence and nature of drug and alcohol use amongst a specific target population of interest - namely police detainees. Since 2009 one of the nine sites across Australia in which data is collected include the Kings Cross LAC. This data is collected on a quarterly or bi-annual basis and includes self-report and urine tests. It also collects detainees self-reported attributions on the extent to which their current offence is caused by alcohol and/or drugs. This could be used to compare attributions for violent offences specifically.
- *Household travel survey*: The household travel survey, collected by the NSW Bureau of Transport Statistics, collects data on an annual basis on travel within the Sydney Greater Metropolitan Area. It documents travel flows between LGAs, day and time of travel etc.

New data collection

The administrative data sources outlined above provide a means for testing the overall impact of the suite of measures introduced in Sydney in February. However, the measures in the CBD and Kings Cross were many and varied, including changes to transport, restrictions on particular drink sales late at night, Responsible Service of Alcohol marshals and a range of other measures. Untangling the mechanisms behind any reductions in violence observed following the measures requires more involved data collection. Comparative studies of entertainment precincts within the restriction zone and those not subject to the restrictions would provide evidence on the specific ways that the restrictions have affected harm rates. Studies should include:

- Observational studies within venues (e.g. ^{7,8}) to examine patterns of drinking, service practices and violent incidents
- Observational studies outside venues, including at venue queues, transport hubs and fast food stores
- Street intercept surveys with patrons to assess intoxication levels, pre-drinking and experience of violence. Some pre-intervention data are available from a major study of nightlife conducted in 2012⁹. Similarly, the pre-existing data collected by City of Sydney (discussed above) provide potential baseline data for future data collection.
- Surveys of residents, measuring their perceptions of the impact of the restrictions and their perceptions of safety.

⁶ City of Sydney, *Late Night Management Areas Research – Phase 3 Report*, December 2013. Sydney, NSW: City of Sydney.
http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0014/200129/Late-Night-Management-Areas-Research-Phase-3-report-December-2012.PDF

⁷ Graham, K, Bernards, S, Osgood, DW and Wells, S (2012) 'Hotspots' for aggression in licensed drinking venues. *Drug and Alcohol Review* 31, 377-384.

⁸ Homel, R, Carvolth, R, Hauritz, M, McIlwain, G and Teague, R (2004) Making licensed venues safer for patrons: what environmental factors should be the focus of interventions? *Drug and Alcohol Review* 23, 19-29.

⁹ Miller, P, Pennay, A, Droste, N *et al.* (2013) *Patron Offending in Night-Time Entertainment Districts*. Canberra, Australia: National Drug Law Enforcement Research Fund.

- In depth qualitative interviews with key informants, including licensees, bar staff, taxi drivers and police.
- The collection of detailed data on alcohol sales has recently been committed to by the Victorian Government¹⁰ and is already underway in Western Australia, the ACT, Queensland and South Australia. These data could have provided critical information on how the policy changes impact on the businesses in the area and would facilitate an analyses of the potential switching of purchasing between packaged liquor and on-premise outlets. These data should be collected as part of standard monitoring practice to ensure the best possible evidence is available for future policy changes.

Summary

The suite of measures implemented in Kings Cross and the Sydney CBD were a major 'natural experiment' in the management of late night entertainment precincts and represents an opportunity to improve our knowledge of the effectiveness of widely implemented policy measures. This is an opportunity not only to provide crucial public policy evidence for Sydney and New South Wales, but for jurisdictions around Australia and the world. Thus, it is critical that a robust, well-funded and independent evaluation is conducted to measure the positive and negative impacts of the measures and to assess which aspects represent successful measures to reduce alcohol and drug-related harm.

¹⁰ <http://www.premier.vic.gov.au/media-centre/media-releases/10628-legislation-to-tackle-alcohol-related-harm.html?highlight=YToxOntpOjA7czo5OjI3aG9sZXNhbgUjO30=>