

**Submission
No 104**

MEASURES TO REDUCE ALCOHOL AND DRUG- RELATED VIOLENCE

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Position: Policy Advisor
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15 August 2014

The Committee Manager
Committee on Law and Safety
Parliament House
Macquarie St
Sydney NSW 2000
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Dear Committee Members

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

ACON welcomes the opportunity to comment on the effectiveness of recent measures to reduce alcohol and drug related violence in the Sydney Central Business District. ACON was concerned about the content of this package, as announced by then Premier O'Farrell on 21 January 2014 and passed by the NSW Parliament on 30 January 2014, and we continue to be concerned about the impact on our communities.

Our comments below are focused on the ineffectiveness of the venue lock out provisions of that package and the impacts that have been seen on the Oxford Street Precinct, which under the legislation is deemed part of the Sydney CBD Entertainment Precinct. We also address the proposal for low risk venues to purchase 12 additional late trading permits each year.

ACON is New South Wales' leading health promotion organisation specialising in HIV and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) health.

ACON runs the Anti-Violence Project (AVP), a project that supports LGBTI people who have experienced homophobic, transphobic, domestic or family violence. The AVP works with a variety of services including the NSW Police Force, other government agencies, and mainstream and LGBTI community organisations. The AVP aims to improve the outcomes for victims and to address the underlying causes of violence. In addition to this, the AVP runs campaigns and programs promoting community safety, engaging communities and responding to community needs.

The AVP receives reports of violence from the LGBTI community. Since the introduction of the measures aimed at reducing alcohol related violence, there has been no discernible impact on the number of reports of violence made to the AVP. It should be noted, however, that the rate of violent incidents being reported to the AVP has declined over the years and that the LGBTI community has long standing experience in organising parties and events with minimal associated violence.

The annual Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Festival has seen minimal incidents occur, especially given its size and magnitude. There are a number of peak times outside the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Festival, such as ANZAC day and Queens Birthday long weekends, during which more LGBTI events are organised, again with no or minimal attendant violence.

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We maintain our concern, raised at the time, that the package provides no tangible benefits to our communities or the Oxford Street Precinct, other than to limit the ability of our community to come together at night and challenge the commercial viability of community venues.

We are aware of the proposal included in the Government's response to the five-year statutory review into the Liquor Act and the Gaming and Liquor Administration Act that would allow low risk venues to buy a package of 12 late night trading permits. The Oxford Street precinct appears to be a low violence area in terms of street and venue based violence, and venues in the precinct should be able to access these additional permits.

As such ACON supports the proposal for additional late night trading permits, while maintaining our objection to many of the measures introduced earlier this year.

ACON has a long and effective history of working with inner city communities around a range of issues including alcohol and other drug use and street safety. We welcome this opportunity to provide information to the committee on the impact of the package of measures introduced to reduce violence, and we look forward to being involved in the delivery of any accompanying initiatives that may be planned to reduce alcohol and drug related violence against our communities.

Should you require any further information please contact me on [REDACTED] or email

[REDACTED]

Kind regards

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Nicolas Parkhill
Chief Executive Officer