

**Submission
No 607**

SYDNEY'S NIGHT TIME ECONOMY

Organisation: People's Alcohol Action Coalition

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people's alcohol action coalition

PAAC

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1ST July 2019

The Hon. Natalie Ward MLC,
Committee Chair,
Joint Select Committee on Sydney's night time economy

NightTimeEconomy@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Ms Ward,

SUBMISSION TO THE *INQUIRY INTO SYDNEY'S NIGHT TIME ECONOMY*

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the *Inquiry into Sydney's night time economy*.

The People's Alcohol Action Coalition (PAAC) is an Alice Springs-based community alcohol reform group. It developed in response to a growing awareness of excessive alcohol use and associated harm in the central Australian region, and provides a platform for community action to reduce alcohol-related harm. Its formation in late 1995 followed a public rally in response to alcohol problems instigated by the late Dr Charles Perkins, Aboriginal activist and Australian and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) Central Zone Commissioner.

PAAC aims to work towards reducing the impact of alcohol-related harm through a number of strategies, including: developing constructive reforms to the sale of alcohol; advocating for controls on public consumption; advocating for the responsible service of alcohol; and promoting healthy lifestyles.

Members include social workers, lawyers, medical practitioners, Aboriginal organisations, churches, social service organisations and individuals. Collaborating organisations include the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, Central Land Council, Aboriginal Medical Service Alliance Northern Territory, Northern Territory Council of Social Services, Central Australian Youth Link Up Service, the Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council (Aboriginal Corporation) and the Public Health Association of Australia NT.

PAAC lobbies for reforms in central Australia and across the NT, interstate and on a national basis. It has been very effective in its efforts in the NT, which now has a minimum unit price (floor price) of \$1.30 per standard drink, a Banned Drinker Register re-introduced in 2017 by the current Labor government after it was abandoned by its Country Liberal predecessor, and

trained police auxiliary liquor inspectors stationed outside bottle shops in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and Katherine. This latter measure in particular is contributing to significant reductions in alcohol-related assaults including alcohol-related domestic violence assaults, and also to a significant fall in alcohol-related ED presentations. The NT *Liquor Act* is currently undergoing major amendment, as recommended by the Riley Review into alcohol policy and legislation in 2017, and these changes should come into force in October.

PAAC does not claim credit for all the progressive changes that are taking place, but it has been a consistent and strong advocate for reform for many years. It has also argued for a volumetric tax and minimum unit price to be introduced Australia-wide, and has made submissions to more than one Federal Government inquiry on this and other alcohol-related matters.

In relation to late-night trading, our position is as follows:

- Introduce designated precincts for late night venues, based on the density of outlets and late trading in these locations. Late night precincts would include:
 - o on-licence premises trading be able to apply to trade until 2am subject to a risk assessment; and
 - o drink restrictions after midnight.

On a number of occasions, when objecting to applications by licensees to extend trading hours in Alice Springs, PAAC has referred to evidence of the beneficial effects of the efforts to reduce harm through the regulation of late-night trading in both Newcastle and Sydney. PAAC is interested in supporting properly evaluated evidence-based reforms and also trials of measures with a reasonable chance of success, in whichever jurisdiction they are implemented.

We believe this review process provides the NSW Government with an important opportunity to ensure that Sydney's night time economy is safe for all to enjoy, by retaining the live-saving late night measures. Like many other Australians, PAAC's members were appalled at the level of alcohol abuse and ensuing violence and deaths that occurred in Sydney prior to the changes. There is overwhelming evidence that the comprehensive reforms that have reduced alcohol-related harm in Sydney have also had positive effects on the diversification and growth of Sydney's night-time economy.

PAAC wishes to support to the submission prepared by the NSW-ACT Alcohol Policy Alliance (NAAPA). We are aware that NAAPA is a coalition of 48 organisations working to reduce alcohol harm by ensuring that evidence-based solutions inform alcohol policy in NSW and the ACT.

PAAC wishes in particular to support NAAPA's argument for the retention of the life-saving harm reduction policies that were introduced in Sydney following the tragic and unnecessary deaths of young people. We note in particular the evidence of change with which these measures have been credited since their commencement in Sydney on 24th February 2014:

- a dramatic reduction in non-domestic violence, with substantial reductions observed in entertainment precincts^{1,2}
- reduced rates of alcohol-related serious injury presentations³
- a 60 per cent reduction in serious facial injuries requiring surgery at St Vincent's Hospital in the two years following their introduction.^{4,5}

The main conditions related to the measures designed to reduce alcohol-related harm are 3.00am last drinks and a 1.30am one-way door policy (live entertainment venues may apply for a half-hour extension). These changes have been the subject of a number of government and academic studies and reviews. These studies have shown significant reductions in harm, including reductions in alcohol-related non-domestic violence, reductions in hospital admissions and emergency department presentations, and significantly improved local amenity.^{6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14} These findings are also consistent with evidence on the effectiveness of late-night measures from Europe and Canada.¹⁵

Furthermore, the measures have promoted greater diversification in the night-time economy by encouraging substantial growth, in particular in the number of entertainment establishments since 2013.¹⁶ Additionally, the drinks sub-sector alone saw increases in the number of establishments (4.9 per cent), employment (8.7 per cent) and turnover (6.5 per cent) for the period 2016-2017. It is evident that the life-saving policies are having a positive effect on health and community safety as well as on Sydney's night-time economy.

The recently published *ImagineSydney* report on Sydney's night-time economy from Deloitte highlights the importance of a planning and licensing system that is not focussed solely on drinking, but rather encourages initiatives such as late-night gallery and museum hours, live music or comedy, and food and other retail offerings.¹⁷

A city that is dependent on the sale of alcohol past 3am is neither a healthy nor sustainable city. The violence associated with heavy drinking is exclusionary; it actively discourages many people from enjoying the more diverse night-time economy that Sydney needs to continue to develop in order to be a world-class metropolis.

The policies designed to reduce alcohol-related harm in Sydney's CBD and Kings Cross are of vital importance in striking the balance and promoting diverse night-time offerings. The policies save lives and must be retained.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to raise these important issues. If you have any questions, please contact either myself or PAAC's Police Co-ordinator Vicki Gillick:

[Redacted contact information]

Yours sincerely,

[Redacted signature]

Dr. John Boffa
on behalf of PAAC
People's Alcohol Action Coalition
Alice Springs NT

[Redacted contact information]

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- ¹¹ Kypri, K., McElduff, P. & Miller, P. (2014). Restrictions in pub closing times and lockouts in Newcastle, Australia five years on. *Drug and Alcohol Review* 33(3): 323–6.
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