

Submission
No 84

INQUIRY INTO TOURISM IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Organisation: Last Drinks at 12

Date received: 12/09/2013

Last Drinks at 12

www.lastdrinksat12.org.au

10 September 2013

General Purpose Standing Committee No.3
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Re: Submission By last Drinks at 12 to Parliamentary Inquiry into Tourism in Local Communities

Dear Committee

Last Drinks at 12 is a community group that has recently been formed in Byron Bay. Our group represents a cross section of the Byron population and includes medical and legal professionals, local business owners and tourism operators, youth and community workers, and parents.

Our group was formed as a result of 3 public community forums which were held in Byron Bay earlier this year as a result of the increased violence in our town especially on New Year's Eve. At these forums, alcohol related violence was the number one issue that people wanted addressed.

The Byron Shire, especially Byron Bay, is confronting a real crisis. Alcohol-related violence and associated harms are severely damaging our young people, our community and the lifestyle we love. We're facing a problem that's changing the very nature of our town.

Ugly drunken brawls have become a constant feature of weekend nights. People are seriously hurt, sexual assaults regularly occur and residents, some who've lived here all their lives, are afraid to go into town on weekend nights. Our health services are being stretched to their limits.

The statistics tell a terrible story: Byron Bay is the sixth most violent place in NSW as far as alcohol related street violence is concerned. The number of assaults is three times the State average. The number of young women being sexually assaulted is double the average. People are having their lives ruined by actual and feared violence, injury and criminal convictions.

At the heart of the problem is the dangerous over supply and availability of alcohol in the early hours of the morning and the lack of effective deterrence.

Last Drinks at 12 mission is to prevent alcohol-related violence, sexual assault, anti-social behavior and youth binge drinking by engaging the Byron community to take effective action to tackle this serious social crisis.

Over the past couple of months we have been looking at local, national and international research on the issue, we have been talking with the local Police, doctors, nurses and emergency workers at the Byron

hospital, community groups, hotel operators, young people, Byron Shire Councillors, our local elected members of parliament and the Byron Bay Liquor Accord.

We have also set up a website www.lastdrinksat12.org.au and been gathering support from many individuals, businesses and community groups.

On 24 August we held a community information forum on the issue at the Byron Bay Community Centre. The Community Centre was filled to maximum capacity and people heard speakers such as Royal Brisbane Hospital Faciomaxillary surgeon, Anthony Lynham; AMA Councillor, Dr Michael Gliksman; Police Union rep Detective Senior Constable Tony King; and Tony Brown who led the campaign in Newcastle to reduce alcohol related violence. See the newspaper report here <http://www.echo.net.au/2013/08/mayor-ignoring-crime-stats/>.

We also heard from our local doctors that the resources at the Byron hospital on weekend nights are stretched, that our health workers are placed under enormous stress and suffer abuse from intoxicated patients. We heard from a youth worker about the violent practice in Byron of stomping on people heads.

Measures to Reduce Alcohol Related Violence In and Around Venues.

Following our consideration of the overwhelming amount of independent scientific research and discussions with recognised medical and law experts, we are very confident that the urgent implementation of the following proven 4 key cost saving preventative measures will achieve and sustain a disproportionate reduction in primarily preventable alcohol related harms in our town. We remain convinced that a significant improvement in our town's community safety, friendliness and associated reputation will attract and retain the type of national and international visitors and their families willing to stay longer and provide significant investment into our broad based tourism economy include sustainable job prospects.

Those who only attend our town to become highly intoxicated to 3am on mainly weekend nights supported by a late night drinking industry (only 4 pubs and clubs trade past 1am) , clearly have an overall negative social impact on our local economy when you take into account the full public, social, crime, health and reputational costs that are not borne by the handful of late trading premises. This is not the type of "fun" or "vibrancy" our community desires or deserves.

An eminently achievable substantial decrease in alcohol related violence in our town by the adoption of our preferred modest measures will also substantially reduce the pressure and stress on our hospital and emergency services.

Following our Forum, Byron Shire Council resolved to consider implementing Recommendation 2 - The Formation of a PLA and Recommendation 3- Freeze on Extended Trading Liquor Licences.

Recommendation 4 is currently being voluntarily trialled by the Byron bay Liquor Accord. The link to the newspaper report is <http://www.northernstar.com.au/news/byron-council-moves-on-alcohol/2002796/>.

However, our research shows that the most effective strategy to address late night violence is to reduce the supply of alcohol after midnight.

1. Reduction in late night trading hours

A modest reduction in late night trading hours after 12 am will have a substantial impact in reducing alcohol fuelled violence and related harms. The majority of the violence occurs in Byron CBD between midnight and 3 am on Friday and Saturday nights. Most of the violence involves young men. Research shows that for every 1 hour reduction in late night trading up to a certain limit, you can expect around a 17% fall in the number of alcohol related assaults. We are recommending that the service of alcoholic drinks ceases at 12 am in all licenced venues in Byron Bay.

2. Formation of a Byron Bay Precinct Liquor Accord (PLA)

The current effectiveness of the Byron Bay Liquor Accord with its voluntary membership and measures is limited. The Accord members appear to make a lot of money alcohol sales but put little back into the negative impacts created by these sales and there are no mandatory requirements for them to do anything. We support the formation of a PLA in Byron, where membership is **compulsory** for all late night trading venues in the Precinct. Any measures implemented need to be mandatory.

3. Freeze on Extended Trading Liquor Licences

No more extended trading liquor licences to be issued in Byron Bay. We already have 30% more liquor licences than the state average per head of population.

4. Other Measures

We support the introduction of other simple, modest, cost-effective and proven **mandatory** measures to reduce alcohol related harms. These include limiting the supply of high-strength drinks, stopping the practice of “drink hoarding” and prohibiting the harmful discounting and promotion of alcohol products at on-licence and off-licence premises in Byron Bay. Some of these measures are already being trialled by the Byron Bay Liquor Accord.

Regards

Dr Blake Eddington
Emergency Medicine Specialist , B.Med, FACEM

On behalf of

Last Drinks at 12