

**Submission
No 48**

**INQUIRY INTO STRATEGIES TO REDUCE ALCOHOL
ABUSE AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE IN NSW**

Organisation: City of Sydney Council

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Our Ref : S093721

Legislative Council
Standing Committee on Social Issues
NSW Parliament
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Sir/Madam,

Inquiry into strategies to reduce alcohol abuse among young people in NSW

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the inquiry into strategies to reduce alcohol abuse among young people in NSW. The City of Sydney has provided comment to two key focus areas covered as part of your inquiry. These are:

- The effectiveness of alcohol harm minimisation strategies targeted at young people.
- Measures to reduce alcohol related violence, including in and around licensed venues.

The effectiveness of alcohol harm minimisation strategies targeted at young people

In coordination with the youth sector in NSW, the City of Sydney has adopted a harm minimisation approach to alcohol and other drug use among young people. The City's youth programming facilitates this through open discussion with young people, education and alternative programming.

For over 18 months the City has been undertaking research and major public engagement to develop a long-term vision for Sydney at night. The OPEN Sydney Strategy and Action Plan is the City's strategy for improving Sydney at night, with the primary purpose of making Sydney a safe night-time city for our residents, workers, businesses and visitors. Through this process, a discussion paper was developed for public consultation.

The discussion paper is available at the following link; http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0018/131715/OpenDirectionsReportFinal.pdf and the City recommends that the panel considers this paper, which contains reference to international research, in particular Dr Phil Hadfield's 'Night-Time Economy Management; International Research and Practice, A Review for the City of Sydney, September 2011', also available on the following link; http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0016/131740/InternationalEvidenceLiteratureReview.pdf

The City's own research shows that 74 per cent of those accessing the night-time economy after 11pm are aged 15 – 30 and through OPEN Sydney we strongly

advocate for the need to provide a more diverse night-time economy with more non-alcohol activities available to this younger audience.

There are currently limited alternative options in late night activities for young people. The City of Sydney Youth Services is now focussing on live music events for young people as an alternative option. Live music has been identified by young people as the first preference for live entertainment. The opportunities sit not only in the audience's ability to access alternative entertainment but also in live performance opportunities for young performers.

The OPEN Sydney discussion paper also considers the impact of education campaigns to reduce risky alcohol consumption. We draw the panel's attention to Babor et al (2010) who note that despite the proliferation of education programs, there is very little evaluation and evidence to suggest that they deliver a reduction in risky drinking or alcohol related harm. The recommendation is for greater longer-term evaluations of educational campaigns and consideration be given as to whether education campaigns represent the most effective strategy for reducing risky drinking practices.

Measures to reduce alcohol related violence, including in and around licensed venues

Alcohol related violence is a key consideration for the City of Sydney. The OPEN Sydney Strategy has been developed specifically to address this issue.

As you would be aware, during the past decade, there has been increasing attention in Australia on the relationship between alcohol, violence and licensed premises. A significant body of research has emerged during this period, linking the concentration of licensed premises with alcohol-related violence and associated cumulative impacts in Australian literature (Donnelly et al 2006 and Chikritzhs et al 2007) and international literature (Roberts & Eldridge 2010 and Hadfield 2009).

There have been strong and focused debates on potential measures to address cumulative impacts within the City of Sydney. The City's own research into cumulative impacts has demonstrated a clear link between the overall 'availability'¹ of alcohol in a defined location and violence and antisocial behaviour. As a local government authority the City is concerned about the impacts on public health and safety, the local economy, particularly with regards to business diversity, as well as the reasonable amenity and safety of its residents.

International and Australian evidence suggests a clear link between terminal trading hours and levels of alcohol related violence². Trading hours for licensed premises are determined via the respective licensing legislation. Many cities globally do not have 24 hour licensing. Those cities with earlier trading hours tended to have lower levels of alcohol related crime, however many factors influence crime levels.

Public space management strategies can also reduce the opportunity for alcohol-related violence. These strategies can include the installation of CCTV cameras in night-time entertainment precincts, improved availability of the public transport

¹ Note: 'Availability' is determined by the number of outlets (volume), the density of outlets (proximity), and the trading hours of outlets (length of time alcohol is available)

² Preventative Health Taskforce (2009) Technical Paper 3: *Preventing Alcohol-related harm in Australia: a window of opportunity, Australia: the healthiest country by 2020, National Preventative Health Strategy*. Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, Canberra, Australia

throughout the night, the deployment of 'capable guardians' in the public domain, most obviously Police Officers but also through programs such as the City's 'Precinct Ambassador' initiative. Within licensed premises, well designed venues with high standards of compliance with RSA conditions and staff trained in conflict management can contribute to reductions in alcohol related violence both inside the premise and also in the public domain.

There are multiple factors to consider when addressing the complex issue of alcohol-related violence. The City of Sydney strongly supports an integrated approach to this issue as stand-alone measures can only have a limited impact. The Lord Mayor has recently written to the Premier to request the establishment of a night-time economy taskforce to address the issue of alcohol related violence in NSW.

The City would be happy to provide relevant staff to address the panel if required.

Yours sincerely,

Ann Hoban
Director, City Life

Attachments:

- OPEN Sydney Strategy and Action Plan
- OPEN Sydney Discussion Paper
- Late Night Management Areas Research
- 'Night-Time Economy Management; International Research and Practice, A Review for the City of Sydney