

31 March 2016



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(Via email: [alcohol.violence.sen@aph.gov.au](mailto:alcohol.violence.sen@aph.gov.au))

Dear Committee Secretary

The Council of Capital City Lord Mayors (CCCLM) represents the interests of the Lord Mayors (and ACT Chief Minister) of Australia's eight capital cities. In addition, the CCCLM acts as Secretariat of the National Local Government Drug and Alcohol Committee, whose members include capital cities as well as:

- City of Gold Coast
- Newcastle City Council
- Parramatta City Council
- Byron Shire Council
- City of Port Philip
- Maroondah City Council
- City of Frankston

Australian city councils continuously manage the effects of alcohol and other drugs in their late night districts, and as such, the CCCLM welcomes the opportunity of contributing to this inquiry. The CCCLM supports a unified approach to reducing alcohol-related harm.

City councils facilitate diverse and vibrant night time economies – estimated at contributing \$108 billion in sales revenues, and employing over one million people in 2014. Whilst addressing the need for a nationally consistent approach to alcohol-fuelled violence, there is a need to balance this with protecting and growing our 24-hour society and building better places for people to live, work and visit.

Cities must balance their range of roles as the centre of business, culture, leisure, entertainment and retailing, as well as manage local communities and localities. Federal, State/Territory and Local Governments have a responsibility to support the range of city users; including residents, day and night time businesses and those that come to the city for work and entertainment.

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Local Government has a pivotal role in engaging with, and planning for, communities. Councils work closely with residents, workers and visitors and have a unique understanding of the needs and aspirations of the people within their jurisdiction. Councils also have a strong understanding of the places within their boundaries and the purpose and uses (intended and unintended) of those places to the community.

The damaging effects of Australian's excessive drinking culture remain a strong focus in our communities. Research conducted in 2014 indicated alcohol related deaths increased by 62% in the past decade, and alcohol is a contributing factor to over 200 diseases<sup>1</sup>.

The CCCLM agrees there is a need for broad policy discussion (between all three levels of government) on the following areas to address alcohol related harm in our cities:

- National best practice principles for liquor licensing to provide greater consistency in legislation
- Research into night time economies and data provision to inform legislative and regulatory decisions

Capital cities have an important role to play in ensuring a whole-of-government and community response to reducing the level of alcohol related harm, which should not be overlooked.

Across Australia, city councils have developed and implemented a variety of initiatives and strategies specifically designed to manage alcohol-related issues, including:

- precinct based action plans and strategies in night-time activated districts, which may include
  - enhanced transportation options, such as taxi rank supervision and more frequent public transport
  - partnership programs/memoranda of understanding with service and community groups, industry, private and public sector agencies (including liquor accords)
  - initiatives addressing safe partying, youth and recreational programs, domestic and sexual violence
- diverse programming of events supported by policies and guidelines that help reduce alcohol-related harm through a civil and safe nightlife culture
- original research and extensive consultation to enhance the understanding of alcohol issues in the evening and night-time economy
- planning scheme amendments and acts to control the type, number, trading hours and cumulative impact of licensed premises (for example City of Melbourne's Planning Scheme, clause 52.27)
- providing or facilitating CCTV networks enabling a fast response to incidents
- designing and redeveloping public spaces to reduce opportunities for crime

Public transport plays an important role in the effective movement of people from cities late at night. The Victorian Government's implementation of Melbourne's late night transport pilot is commended. The 'Night Network' includes all night public transport on weekends, with all night metropolitan trains and trams, late night buses, and a 2am coach service to key regional centres.

The pilot will be evaluated by May 2016.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.fare.org.au/2014/07/alcohols-burden-of-disease/>

## LIQUOR LICENSING

Australia has a wide range of liquor licensing regimes with legislation around alcohol-related issues varying greatly in jurisdictions.

Local and State and Territory Governments have developed practices designed to address alcohol-related harm, for example:

- the ACT risk based licensing system – with proceeds diverted to additional policing
- Victoria's moratorium on the issuing of liquor licenses post (2009 – 15), which has been extended until 30 June 2019, and includes granting of new liquor license applications for licensees wanting to trade past 1am in the local governments areas of Melbourne (including Docklands); Stonnington; Yarra and Port Phillip. Venue operators who wish to extend their operating hours beyond 1am must satisfy a number of criteria to the Victorian Commission of Gaming and Liquor Regulation
- Queensland's Drink Safe Precinct trial, which had an emphasis on managing entertainment precincts to improve safety through collaborative forums and increased penalties.

The CCCLM supports an evidence-based policy framework that provides best-practice principles that inform and strengthen jurisdictional licensing frameworks and minimises alcohol-related harm, for example:

- Assessment of policies which cover the supply, access and availability of alcohol; and take into account outlet density, saturation and evaluation of cumulative impacts (including take-away liquor sales).
- Public notification and standards of community consultation
- Consistency between licensing and planning systems
- Improved and nationally-consistent guidelines in the liquor licensing process that reduces red tape for businesses

This should be balanced by considering the different perspectives of key stakeholders including local government, health, public safety, planning, tourism and business. Local and State/Territory Governments can work with venue operators to encourage practices that make a positive contribution to our cities. Opportunities to reduce red tape should be explored nationally to stimulate creative and innovative forms of night-time activity.

A national approach that strengthens licensing frameworks, encourages a more diversified night time environment that includes lower impact business models and reduces inappropriate promotion, sale and supply of alcohol is necessary.

## RESEARCH AND PROVISION OF INFORMATION

Significant research has been undertaken across many policy areas relating to alcohol, liquor licensing and the night-time economy. Australia is a world leader in this field of research.

CCCLM has developed a research program that benchmarks the value of the Australian night-time economy, measuring the number of businesses, employment and revenue across the drinks, food and entertainment sectors.

Alcohol sales data is collected by State and Territory governments of Western Australia, Queensland, Northern Territory and ACT. Alcohol sales data provides valuable information for developing and evaluating alcohol policy and liquor licensing.

Sales data is needed from all States and Territories down to the smallest collector area possible to enable analysis of information against a range of criteria, which will contribute to an understanding of the local context, social and environmental impacts on a community.

The collection and release of alcohol sales data would ensure effective measurement of the impacts of changes to regulatory and legislative frameworks. Recent research<sup>2</sup> by the National Drug and Research Institute demonstrates the value of collecting and releasing this vital and powerful level of information.

Understanding the impact of alcohol to our communities, places and cities is critical. Central to this is the need for consistency between jurisdictions in collecting data on wholesale alcohol, alcohol-related accident and emergency admissions, ambulance call-outs and criminal or anti-social incidents. This data would provide the essential, but often missing piece of information to inform local government planning and decision making. It would equip councils to provide informed input into liquor licensing and/or permit applications.

#### THE CULTURE OF DRINKING IN AUSTRALIA

Pre-fuelling remains a real challenge. A targeted, evidence based strategy is needed to address the problem of people arriving in our cities late at night already intoxicated.

Local Government is well placed in:

- identifying and informing stakeholders on safety trends and emerging issues
- understanding their local communities, including their needs and geographical considerations and community sentiment
- providing valuable information to explore the cause of issues, with the aim of contributing practical and policy solutions which address alcohol-related harms
- sharing data and evidence, including data collected directly from community surveys and engagement activities
- providing advice and information on high-risk population groups and their specific safety concerns and effective interventions
- providing advice and information on reducing personal safety in high risk zones, by utilising the Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) guidelines, as well as effective interventions. Council managers are best place to gather intelligence on patterns of safety in cities - places change frequently
- contributing and participating in licensed premises accord groups, in conjunction with police services and venue operators.

The enduring problem of harmful consumption of alcohol has heightened the complexity of Australia's drinking culture. Alcohol consumption impacts on families, women, children, young people and our front line response services, it requires a determined strategy.

Associated with alcohol-related harms, poly drug use must not be lost when considering opportunities for improved ideas to manage alcohol related harm.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://ndri.curtin.edu.au/research/nasdp.cfm>

## NATIONAL ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUG PLANS

Within licensed premises, well designed venues with high standards of compliance with *Responsible Service of Alcohol* (RSA) conditions and staff trained in conflict management, contribute to reductions in alcohol-related violence both inside the premise and also in the public domain. A national approach to RSA training and certification would assist business operators, workers and communities to more clearly understand responsibilities, expectations, accreditation and penalties in all States and Territories.

The inquiry could consider establishing a national training, accreditation and competency card system to ensure nationally consistent standards and make it easier for workers and business operators to more clearly understand what is required.

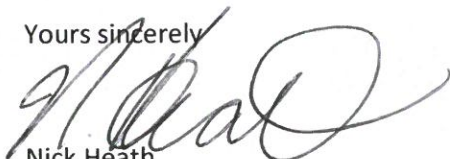
Whilst public education and awareness campaigns have repeatedly been shown to be one of the least effective tools for reducing alcohol consumption and associated harms<sup>3 4</sup> and it can also be demonstrated that RSA alone is ineffective in reducing alcohol-related harms, the CCCLM recognises that there is a high level of activity and community awareness regarding the risks of alcohol consumption and would support a national strategy focussed on education and awareness as part of a suite of activities to support effective intervention and treatment, including alcohol availability and cost, outlet density and trading times.

We note that the Federal Government's alcohol strategy expired in 2011, and the National Drug Strategy expired in 2015. Whilst public consultation on the National Drug Strategy closed at the end of October 2015, and a National Alcohol Strategy 2016-2021 was to be produced in 2015 little progress appears to have been made.

The CCCLM strongly seeks the finalisation of both of these strategies, informed by this inquiry, to demonstrate Federal and State/Territory leadership on this issue.

The CCCLM welcomes the Senate Committee's inquiry into this matter, and would welcome the opportunity of discussion our submission further.

Yours sincerely



Nick Heath  
Chair

**National Local Government Drug & Alcohol Committee**

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<sup>3</sup> [http://www.who.int/choice/publications/p\\_2009\\_CE\\_Alcohol\\_Lancet.pdf](http://www.who.int/choice/publications/p_2009_CE_Alcohol_Lancet.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.ndlrf.gov.au/sites/default/files/publication-documents/monographs/monograph-57.pdf>