



Police Federation
of Australia

The National Voice of Policing

ABN 31 384 184 778

Level 1, 21 Murray Crescent

GRIFFITH ACT 2603

Tel: (02) 6239 8900

Fax: (02) 6239 8999

31 March 2016

Committee Secretary

Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee

PO Box 6100

Parliament House

Canberra, ACT 2601, Australia

Inquiry into the Need for a nationally-consistent approach to alcohol-fuelled violence

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission in response to the Inquiry into the **Need for a nationally-consistent approach to alcohol-fuelled violence**. The Police Federation of Australia (PFA) represents the professional and industrial interests of more than 60,000 of the nation's police officers.

Research, supported by anecdotal evidence from our members, supports that alcohol is a substantial contributor to criminal activity. Our members typically cite alcohol as the biggest problem they encounter, implicated in crime in both the night time economy and domestic settings.

Of particular concern to the PFA are the occupational health and safety risks facing our members when dealing with alcohol- fuelled violence. Excessive alcohol consumption results in regular night-time violence in CBDs in almost all Australian towns and cities. It is particularly problematic in and around licensed premises – pubs, clubs and similar venues. It also leads to serious violence often aimed at police officers and ambulance paramedics working in the vicinity of entertainment venues. The same situation is also experienced by doctors and nurses working in hospital emergency departments.

Many of the issues pertaining to alcohol-fuelled violence fall under the responsibility of the various state government jurisdictions, however, recent interventions in some states demonstrates that effective measures can address the chronic problems we know exist.

There are effective measures that States and Territories can implement to address this issue, given they control the licensing arrangements in each jurisdiction. This is evident by recent legislative changes in NSW and Queensland.

However, given the widespread nature of the problem of alcohol-fuelled violence across Australia, **the PFA considers the Australian Government could play a more influential role addressing the issue by actively encouraging States and Territories to adopt an effective suite of steps. This includes initiatives such as effective closing times, lock outs and restriction of high alcoholic beverages such as ‘shots’ and cocktails after 10pm.**

Approval for federal funding of crime prevention strategies such as CCTV in trouble spots should be dependent on state/territories/local governments adopting strategies as mentioned above.

The PFA believes the effectiveness of any approach to tackling alcohol- fuelled violence should be formed using results- based research. While Queensland has yet to report on the full extent of changes to its legislation, the NSW Government has announced an independent review of the 1.30am lock out and 3am cease alcohol sales measures in the Sydney CBD and Kings Cross. The review will also consider the state-wide 10pm take-away liquor restriction, and the periodic liquor licence fee scheme. Submissions to this inquiry close on 4 April 2016.

Interim research on the impact of the February 2014 intervention indicates that there has been a drop in the number of assaults in the Kings Cross and Sydney CBD entertainment precincts since the introduction of liquor licence reforms.

Menendez et al. (2015) concluded the reforms had led to a significant reduction in assaults in the Kings Cross (down 32%) and Sydney CBD Entertainment (down 26%) precincts, and

found no evidence of displacement in the areas examined. They found some evidence of an increase in assaults in and around The Star Casino, but this was not considered statistically significant.

Fulde, Smith & Forster (2015) analysed data from St Vincent's Hospital in Darlinghurst identifying critically or seriously injured emergency presentations related to alcohol use. They reported the percentage of critically or seriously injured emergency presentations at St Vincent's Hospital relative to alcohol use decreased from 4.9% between February 2013 and February 2014 to 3.7% between February 2014 and February 2015. The percentage of alcohol-related serious injury presentations during high alcohol times (6pm Friday to 6am Sunday) decreased from 10.4% between February 2013 and February 2014 to 7.8% between February 2014 and February 2015.

We refer the Committee to other relevant research, reviews and evaluations as follows:

1. The City of Sydney Council published its Late Night Management Areas Research (LNMAR) on its website on 22 January 2016:

<http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/vision/towards-2030/business-andeconomy/sydney-at-night/late-night-research>.

It reports on phase 4 of the LNMAR (March 2015), with comparisons to earlier phases (i.e. March and December 2010, December 2012). The report provides information on the night time economy and supports planning and management of the City of Sydney at night. The following findings (see pp. 4-5 of the report) have particular relevance:

- It is anticipated that significant drops in pedestrian numbers in Kings Cross and Oxford Street at 1am may be due to the 'lock outs' which apply to the precincts after 1:30am.
- The lack of a secondary peak between 3 and 4am in Kings Cross and Oxford Street suggests that people are leaving the area around 1am, rather than staying in venues until closing times.
- Compared to pedestrian counts in 2012, the 2015 survey shows the largest decrease was in Kings Cross late at night (12-4am).
- Kings Cross still had the highest proportion of serious incidents.

2. <http://www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au/Documents/CJB/CJB183.pdf>

3. <https://www.mja.com.au/journal/2015/203/9/presentations-alcohol-related-serious-injury-major-sydneytrauma-hospital-after#tbox114>

4. Other related reviews in progress include the review of the Three Strikes Disciplinary Scheme and the review of Kings Cross ID scanners. Further information about these reviews is available on the Liquor & Gaming NSW website: www.liquorandgaming.justice.nsw.gov.au.

Many Indigenous communities, particularly in the Northern Territory and Queensland, have developed Alcohol Management Plans to reduce the incidence of alcohol-fuelled violence, severe health problems and poverty in their own communities.

These Alcohol Management Plans should remain in place and deserves strong support from the Australian and State and Territory governments. The notion that communities with extreme levels of unemployment and lack of industry, employment and educational opportunities should have open access to alcohol or seek to profit from the supply and distribution of it is unacceptable and counter-productive.

A variety of programs such as:

- the Banned Drinkers' Register,
- the drug and alcohol focused SMART Court,
- the Alcohol and Other Drugs Tribunal,
- the Retailers' Accord,
- the Safe and Sober Program; and

other crime prevention and community development programs can significantly address the serious problem of alcohol-related violence and resultant crimes affecting Indigenous communities.

The Australian experience demonstrates that effective measures can address the chronic problems we know exist.

In addition to this submission, the PFA would welcome the opportunity to appear before the Committee.

Mark Burgess APM

Chief Executive Officer