

24 January 2018

Mr Jonathan Horton QC  
The Independent Liquor & Gaming Authority  
PO Box 8325  
PARRAMATTA WESTFIELD NSW 2150

Dear Mr Horton,

***SUBMISSION TO THE NEWCASTLE CBD LIQUOR LICENCE CONDITIONS REVIEW***

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the *Newcastle CBD Liquor Licence Conditions Review*.

AMA (NSW) is a medico-political organisation that represents more than 9,000 doctors-in-training, career medical officers, staff specialists, visiting medical officers and specialists and general practitioners in private practice in NSW. AMA (NSW) is a former founding member of the Last Drinks Coalition, and also a prominent member of the NSW/ACT Alcohol Policy Alliance (NAAPA). As such, we support the submission prepared NAAPA. NAAPA is a coalition of 48 organisations working to reduce alcohol-related harms by ensuring that evidence-based solutions inform alcohol policy discussions in NSW and the ACT.

AMA (NSW) recommends maintaining the Newcastle conditions.

The Newcastle conditions are internationally recognised and have paved the way for evidence based policy. They have been thoroughly reviewed by researchers from Newcastle University, John Hunter Hospital and other Australian institutes showing a direct relationship between their implementation and the sustained and overwhelming reduction in night-time assaults. The implementation of these policies resulted in a 37% reduction in night-time alcohol-related assaults and no displacement of harm to adjacent late-night districts.<sup>i</sup> Five years on, the positive effects were sustained with alcohol-related assaults down by 21% per hour on average.<sup>ii</sup>

This scientific evidence is also supported by the latest data from the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR). This data shows that since October 2007, there has been a reduction in the non-domestic assaults recorded by police in Newcastle and Newcastle West on Friday and Saturday night.<sup>iii</sup> Over the 10-year period there has been a 79% reduction in non-domestic assaults in Newcastle and Newcastle West on Friday and Saturday night.

The local businesses have not suffered because of the Newcastle conditions. Data from Newcastle Police demonstrate that from March 2008 to July 2015, there has been a 140% increase in on-premise liquor licenses in the Newcastle CBD. It has been continuously argued by some in the alcohol industry that the measures have resulted in business closures and have destroyed Newcastle's nightlife, but this is clearly not the case. This is just another industry tactic to water down the measures and remove evidence-based policies.

There is clear community support from Newcastle residents. A survey of Lower Hunter household members found that 77% of community members supported the reduced trading hours conditions and 80% of community members supported the lock-out conditions.<sup>iv</sup>

There is also significant support among NSW adults for alcohol harm-minimisation policies:<sup>v</sup>

- 80% support a closing time for pubs, clubs and bars of no later than 3am
- 68% support stopping the sale of alcohol 30 minutes before closing time
- 67% support placing a limit of four drinks on the number of drinks a person can purchase at one time after 10pm

The Sydney measures open loop holes and create risk for Newcastle. The Government has a history of backtracking on its evidence-based policy measures in the Sydney CBD and Kings Cross and should not do the same with Newcastle. It is evident that the Newcastle conditions are working and should remain in place.

### **How excessive drinking affects the medical profession**

Doctors bear witness to the tragic consequences of excessive alcohol consumption in their consulting rooms, hospitals and operating theatres every hour of every day.

Alcohol has been causally linked to more than 60 different medical conditions, including cirrhosis of the liver, inflammation of the gut and pancreas, heart and circulatory problems, sleep disorders, eye diseases and alcohol dependence. Alcohol consumption also raises the overall risk of cancer, including cancer of the mouth, throat and oesophagus, breast cancer and bowel cancer.

In addition to directly affecting those who consume alcohol, excessive drinking often impacts those who are innocent victims. The victims of alcohol-fuelled violence often present in emergency departments with fractured jaws, facial lacerations from glassings, eye injuries that cause blindness, and head injuries, including those from the now infamous coward's punch.

Too often emergency department doctors experience alcohol-related harms in the form of threats or abuse from drunk patients. Doctors and nurses report being punched, spat on, vomited on, and verbally abused by inebriated patients.<sup>vi</sup>

A survey of 2,000 emergency personnel by the Australian College for Emergency Medicine found more than nine in 10 emergency nurses and doctors have experienced physical assaults and threats from drunk patients. Doctors and nurses report being punched, spat on, vomited on, and verbally abused by inebriated patients.<sup>vii</sup>

Not only does this behaviour impact the emergency room physicians, it also affects other patients who must wait for treatment while doctors deal with an aggressive or abusive drunk.

A survey of alcohol-related presentations to Australasian emergency departments (ED) found one in seven ED presentations in Australian and New Zealand were alcohol-related, with some (EDs) seeing more than one in three alcohol-related presentations.<sup>viii</sup>

The negative effects of excessive alcohol consumption aren't restricted to the streets or even our hospitals. They enter people's homes. In 2011, there were 29,684 police-reported

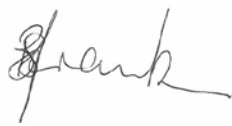
incidents of alcohol-related domestic violence in Australia. In NSW, there were 10,706 incidents of alcohol-related domestic violence reported in 2010-2011.<sup>ix</sup>

Another alarming statistic is the number of substantiated cases of alcohol-related child abuse. Over a million children (22% of all Australian children) are affected in some way by the drinking of others.<sup>x</sup>

The health consequences of relaxing the Newcastle conditions far outweigh the benefits to the alcohol industry. Why risk the health and lives of Australians?

Thank you once again for the opportunity to raise these important issues with you.

Yours sincerely,



Prof Brad Frankum,  
AMA (NSW) President

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<sup>i</sup> Kypri, K., Jones, C., McElduff, P., & Barker, D.J. (2010). Effects of restricting pub closing times on night-time assaults in an Australian city. *Addiction* 106 (2): 303-310.

<sup>ii</sup> 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.

<sup>iii</sup> NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research. (2017). NSW Recorded Crime Statistics Oct 2000 to Sep 2017: Number of non-domestic violence related assaults recorded by the NSW Police Force in Newcastle and Newcastle West as occurring on Friday and Saturday nights, 10pm to 6am. Reference: jh17-15776

<sup>iv</sup> Wiggers, J. Presentation. Research evidence for reducing alcohol-related harm and impact of Newcastle s104 licensing conditions - 2008-2011. University of Newcastle.

<sup>v</sup> Foundation for Alcohol Research Education (2017). Annual Alcohol Poll: Attitudes and behaviours. FARE: Canberra

<sup>vi</sup> [https://www.acem.org.au/getmedia/9916b5fa-e845-4c46-b6a8-5d97d91f4580/141026-AlcoholHarmSurveyMediaRelease\\_TCAtracked-29-10.pdf.aspx?ext=.pdf](https://www.acem.org.au/getmedia/9916b5fa-e845-4c46-b6a8-5d97d91f4580/141026-AlcoholHarmSurveyMediaRelease_TCAtracked-29-10.pdf.aspx?ext=.pdf)

<sup>vii</sup> [https://www.acem.org.au/getmedia/9916b5fa-e845-4c46-b6a8-5d97d91f4580/141026-AlcoholHarmSurveyMediaRelease\\_TCAtracked-29-10.pdf.aspx?ext=.pdf](https://www.acem.org.au/getmedia/9916b5fa-e845-4c46-b6a8-5d97d91f4580/141026-AlcoholHarmSurveyMediaRelease_TCAtracked-29-10.pdf.aspx?ext=.pdf)

<sup>viii</sup> Egerton-Warburton, D., Gosbell, A., Wadsworth, A., Fatovich, DM., Richardson, DB. (2014). Survey of alcohol-related presentations to Australasian emergency departments. *Medical Journal of Australia* 2014; 201: 584-587.

<sup>ix</sup> Laslett, AM.,Mugavin, J., Jiang, H., Manton, E., Callinan, S., MacLean, S., & Room, R. (2015). *The hidden harm: Alcohol's impact on children and families*. Canberra: Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education.

<sup>x</sup> Laslett, AM.,Mugavin, J., Jiang, H., Manton, E., Callinan, S., MacLean, S., & Room, R. (2015). *The hidden harm: Alcohol's impact on children and families*. Canberra: Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education.