



10 February, 2016

MEDIA ALERT

Two years on frontline experts say NSW's liquor laws have made a profound difference with no deaths and few serious injuries

Doctors and nurses from St Vincent's Hospital Sydney believe the NSW Government's liquor laws have been an outstanding success in reducing alcohol-related violence and injuries, not just in Sydney's CBD and Kings Cross, but across the state with bottle shops required to close at 10pm.

The hospital said it was confident the evaluation of the laws would provide the evidence that sensible and balanced measures to regulate the availability of alcohol – by reducing trading hours of pubs and clubs or bottle shops – reduces harm and is good for the broader community.

Professor Gordian Fulde, Director of St Vincent's Emergency said the hospital – which has within its catchment the largest concentration of licensed premises in Australia – had experienced a 25% drop in seriously injured patients accessing the hospital's emergency department during the busiest period (6pm Friday to 6am Sunday) in the year following the laws being introduced.

“Not only that, but the frequency at which people present at the hospital's Emergency Department with alcohol-related issues – and the severity of those issues – has declined, with only three admissions to the hospital's Intensive Care Unit from Sydney's entertainment precinct since the package was introduced,” said Professor Fulde.

“Our experience has been borne out by the official figures which show assaults are significantly down in the CBD and Kings Cross and down by 9% across NSW.

“There's also been no evidence of alcohol-related assaults increasing in nearby areas, such as Newtown, Bondi Beach, or Coogee.

“We understand the Royal Prince Alfred hospital, the major public hospital serving the Newtown area, is reporting no increase in alcohol-related presentations and admissions in the two years since the measures were introduced. Informal discussions with colleagues at other hospitals tell similar stories.

“Over the past few days we've heard some voices call for the laws to be removed, to go back to the way things were in the CBD and Kings Cross two years ago.

“As time passes it's harder for people to remember just what those days were like – but those of us who work on the frontline, we remember. Quite simply, it was a war zone.

“The head injuries and broken limbs as a result of alcohol-related bashings, falls and accidents were seemingly never ending. We can't go back.

“Tragically, this behaviour climaxed with the preventable deaths of two young men – Thomas Kelly and Daniel Christie – both victims of alcohol-fuelled coward’s punches.

“But Thomas and Daniel were the most high profile cases; there had sadly been other deaths as well as countless irreversible injuries.

“Things needed to change. Balance needed to be restored.

“Despite what you hear, Kings Cross is not a ghost town. More than 1 million patrons pass through Kings Cross’ nightclubs and bars every year – and that’s excluding restaurants and small bars.

“As occurred in Newcastle when it brought in similar laws in 2008, we’re already seeing businesses in the area adapt.

“Our chief focus has to be those people whose lives have been saved; who have had appalling injuries prevented as a result of these measures”, said Professor Fulde.

What: Media Conference featuring frontline St Vincent’s staff as well as victims of alcohol violence

Where: St Vincent’s Ambulance Bay, Victoria Road Darlinghurst

When: 2pm Today 10 February, 2016

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