

28 June 2017

Alcohol Policies and Legislation Review
C/- Department of Health
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Dear Panel

The Australian Medical Association Northern Territory (AMA NT) would like to make a submission to the Northern Territory Alcohol Policies and Legislation Review.

The AMA NT supports the issues outlined in the (attached) submission by the People's Alcohol Action Coalition (PAAC) and the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE). In addition, AMA NT wishes to make the following submission to the Enquiry:

The (attached) reviews by Wilson et al (2010) and Skov et al (2010) outline most of the major issues about the damage related to the use of alcohol in the Indigenous population in the NT.

Additional data has reflected on the high rates of physical trauma on the Indigenous population as a result of alcohol (Pointer 2016).

A review of Indigenous mental health in Australia (Parker 2010) also notes the influence of alcohol on emotional trauma and mental health outcomes.

AMA NT wish to address two specific aspects of alcohol policy that I feel could be improved in the NT.

1. Better integration of data in respect to alcohol policy and Licencing.

AMA NT feel that one issue that has continually inhibited effective health policy in respect to the above is the separation of Licencing from health and lack of integration of important data and data linkage from a variety of sources into Licencing and health policy.

As an example of such data linkage in an informal way following the introduction of mid strength beer on the Tiwi Islands in 2006, Parker (pers comm) gave the following presentation at an Australian Institute of Criminology Seminar shortly after.

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“Nguiu Club has had six month trial of mid strength beer since June 2006

Prior to introduction of mid strength beer, 89% of police call outs were alcohol related

Since mid-strength beer, only 2 call outs for alcohol related issues

Far less children on the streets at night

Police have more time to inspect incoming aircraft and marine vessels for illegal alcohol and other substances

Sgt X (pers comm)

Prior to introduction of mid strength beer, domestic disputes between two people would rapidly spread to involve other inebriated members of the households as well as inebriated neighbours. Now disputes limited to the two people only.

More school attendance for young men

Mr Y (NT Racing, Gaming & Licensing Division) pers comm

Anecdotal evidence that much less domestic violence and self-harm behaviour since the introduction of mid strength beer

The information above is data from a number of sources collected in an anecdotal fashion in respect what appears to be an effective intervention in alcohol policy in the Tiwi community.

AMA NT believes that there should be a much more formal integration of data (including police call outs, police call outs and injuries presenting to NT public hospitals, rural and remote clinics) that could be formally collected and integrated, thus informing both public health policy in respect to alcohol and Licensing practice.

AMA NT also feel that if there is not already a representative from the Health Department Alcohol and Other Drugs Section on Licensing NT or a reformed NT Licensing Commission, then this should be a recommendation of the review.

2. Alcohol Lock-Out Laws

Recent data from NSW in respect to early lock out laws and alcohol related harm in Newcastle (Roth and Angus 2015) and Kings Cross (Fulde et al 2015) indicates the significant reduction in alcohol related harm following earlier lock out laws in that State. Information from the NT indicates a similar pattern of damage related to similar patterns of alcohol related harm in high volume areas such as the Mitchell Street Nightclub Precinct. As an example, AMA NT Members have informally reported that 75% of the incidents resulting in people with fractured jaws presenting to RDH relate to the Mitchell Street precinct on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights.

AMA NT thus urges the current Enquiry to consider the introduction of Early Lock Out Laws in the NT.

Yours sincerely



A/Professor Robert Parker
President

References:

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Parker R (2010) Australia's Aboriginal Population and Mental Health. *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*. 198 (1): 3-7

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Roth L and Angus C (2015) Liquor Licensing Restrictions to address Alcohol Related Violence in NSW:2008 to 2014 NSW Parliamentary Research Service.

Skov S et al (2010) How Much is Too Much? Alcohol Consumption and Related Harm in the Northern Territory MJA 193 (5) 269-72

Wilson M, Stearne A, Gray D, Siggers S (2010) *The harmful use of alcohol amongst Indigenous Australians*. Retrieved [access date] from http://www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/alcoholuse_review