
Rural communities deserve consultation on alcohol takeaway hours

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Communities in regional, rural and remote New South Wales deserve a seat at the table to discuss alcohol trading hours and the impact of alcohol-related harm in their local areas.

A group of community and health groups, led by the Trauma Committee of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, have today written to the New South Wales Premier voicing their objection to extending takeaway alcohol hours until midnight, across the state, and urging reconsideration of the decision.

The surprise announcement followed a recommendation arising from the Joint Parliamentary Committee Inquiry on the Sydney Night-Time Economy.

Dr John Crozier, Trauma Committee President says, "Sydney was the sole focus of this Inquiry and it would be an injustice to make decisions that could have devastating impacts on communities across NSW, while their representatives have been denied input to this review."

Dr Crozier says the availability, supply, promotion and consumption of alcohol is a critical contributing factor to the levels of both domestic and non-domestic violence. Recent research suggests that between 40 and 50 per cent of intimate partner homicides are alcohol-related.

"In June this year, the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR) reported that the number of domestic-related homicides in NSW had doubled. Little comfort can be drawn from the other crime statistics related to reported domestic violence incidents.

"BOCSAR data indicates that since 2017 when bottle shop trading hours were pushed back from 10pm until 11pm there has been a 3.6 per cent increase in alcohol-related domestic assault in NSW," Dr Crozier said.

The letter, co-signed by groups, including the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, Australian Medical Association NSW, Australian Orthopaedic Association, Royal Australasian College of Physicians, WayAhead Mental Health Association NSW, Sober in the Country, Alcohol and Drug Foundation, NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association, Public Health Association Australia, and the NSW ACT Alcohol Policy Alliance, Alcohol and Drug Foundation (ADF) and the NSW ACT Alcohol Policy Alliance (NAAPA).

The letter states, "On behalf of the children and women victims of domestic violence in NSW who in many incidents are our and colleagues' patients, we urge your government, based on the best available evidence, not to increase the hours of takeaway alcohol sales and to introduce rigorous controls over its supply by delivery services".

Signatories are calling for all NSW communities to be consulted about impacts in their local areas and are asking the Premier for an opportunity to discuss their concerns.

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About the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS): RACS is the leading advocate for surgical standards, professionalism and surgical education in Australia and New Zealand. The College is a not-for-profit organisation that represents more than 7000 surgeons and 1300 surgical trainees and International Medical Graduates. RACS also supports healthcare and surgical education in the Asia-Pacific region and is a substantial funder of surgical research. There are nine surgical specialties in Australasia being: Cardiothoracic surgery, General surgery, Neurosurgery, Orthopaedic surgery, Otolaryngology Head-and-Neck surgery, Paediatric surgery, Plastic and Reconstructive surgery, Urology and Vascular surgery.

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