

16th December 2016

The Hon Marlene Kairouz MP
Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation
Level 26
121 Exhibition Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

Dear Minister

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the review of the Liquor Control Reform Act 1998 (Victoria).

This Review provides a valuable opportunity for the Victorian Government to implement evidence-based reforms to reduce alcohol harm.

I would like to offer my support to the submission prepared by the Alcohol Policy Coalition (APC). APC is a collaboration of health and allied agencies who share a concern about the level of alcohol misuse and the associated health and social consequences for the community.

Too many people are affected by alcohol harm in Victoria through assault,^{i,ii} domestic violence,ⁱⁱⁱ road crashes,^{iv} and child maltreatment.^{v,vi,vii} In 2012-13, there were 7,744 emergency department presentations in Victoria in which alcohol was identified as a contributing factor. The rate of such presentations have increased by 58.6 per cent since 2003-04, from 8.7 per 100,000 to 13.8 per 100,000.^{viii}

I am a public health researcher at the Centre for Alcohol Policy Research (CAPR) at La Trobe University. I have been working on alcohol policy research for close to ten years. Alongside the APC submission, my research work draws attention to the following three research issues:

1. Successive revisions of Victoria's Liquor Act have made it harder for local government and members of the community to object to new liquor license applications.^{ix} While changes to Victoria's planning framework were intended to provide local governments with a new mechanism to prevent increases in harms associated with the growth of licensed premises^x, they have largely failed to deliver this outcome.^{xi}
2. There are a series of robust, well designed Australian studies which demonstrate that reducing late-night trading hours for on-premise venues (bars, hotels etc.) substantially reduces rates of violence. The research evidence is strong enough to consider last-drinks policies for bars and pubs as a key approach to reducing late-night violence in Victoria.^{xii}
3. Enforcement of the Liquor Control Reform Act 1998 has largely focuses on administrative breaches of the Act, rather than the inappropriate supply of alcohol. Without compliance inspectors spending more time observing sales in on-premise licensed venues (to the intoxicated and underage) enforcement activity is unlikely to result in a reduction of alcohol-related harms.

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

Yours sincerely



Claire Wilkinson
Research Officer
Centre for Alcohol Policy Research, La Trobe University

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- ^{iv} Chikritzhs, T., Stockwell, T. (2006). The impact of later trading hours for hotels on levels of impaired driver road crashes and driver breath alcohol levels. *Addiction*, 101(9):1254-64.
- ^v Laslett, A.M., 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.
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- ^{viii} Turning Point. (2016). *AODstats*. Eastern Health. Retrieved from: <http://aodstats.org.au/>
- ^{ix} **Wilkinson, C.** & Taylor E. Public participation in liquor licensing: the devil is in the detail. *Bang the Table*. 2016, 13 July. Available from: <http://www.bangthetable.com/public-participation-liquor-licensing/>
- ^x **Wilkinson, C.** 2012. Local government and cumulative impact: A tool to limit the concentration of liquor licences? *DrugInfo* newsletter, volume 10, number 3, October 2012. <http://www.druginfo.adf.org.au/newsletters/newsletter-local-government>
- ^{xi} **Wilkinson, C.** *A study of regulatory approaches to issuing liquor licences in Victoria, Australia*. PhD thesis, Melbourne University (forthcoming).
- ^{xii} **Wilkinson, C.**, Livingston, M., & Room, R. (2016). Impacts of changes to trading hours of liquor licences on alcohol-related harm: a systematic review 2005–2015. *Public health research and practice*, 26(4). e2641644
- ^{xiii} **Wilkinson, C.** & MacLean, S. 2014. Enforcement of Liquor Laws: the introduction of civilian inspectors in Victoria in Manton E, Room R, Giorgi C, Thorn M, eds. *Stemming the tide of alcohol: liquor licensing and the public interest*, Canberra: Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education in collaboration with The University of Melbourne, 2014. Pp 188-195 (Chapter 20)