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ALCOHOL INQUIRY CAUTIONED NOT TO JUDGE WITHOUT PROPER EVALUATION

2 September 2014: The NSW ACT Alcohol Policy Alliance (NAAPA) has warned a NSW Parliamentary Committee against prematurely judging measures to reduce alcohol-related violence in NSW.

In its submission to the NSW Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety's *Inquiry into measures to reduce alcohol and drug-related violence*, NAAPA has also taken aim at the alcohol industry's attempts to undermine the measures, and in particular its unsubstantiated claims that the earlier closing times within the Sydney CBD are having a disastrous impact on the night time economy.

Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education Chief Executive, Michael Thorn says it was always expected that licensees would experience a change in business after the introduction of 3am last drinks and the 1.30am lock-out, but says industry's exaggerated claims are unfounded and ignore an inconvenient truth that the night time economy is in fact, far broader than just the alcohol industry.

"The purpose of these measures was to reduce the availability of alcohol during late night trade and in turn, to reduce the high levels of alcohol harms. This is not an unintended consequence of these measures, but absolutely what the measures were designed to do, and for that we should be unapologetic. To suggest that the measures are destroying the night time economy is simply incorrect and ignores the fact that alcohol sales are just one part of diverse and vibrant night time economy."

"The bottom line is that venues whose financial success was predicated solely on serving copious amounts of booze with little regard for the consequences, now have two choices. Those venues can continue to see business decline or can choose to adapt and diversify," Mr Thorn said.

With the first set of measures including 3am last drinks and the 10pm closing time for all off-licence premises introduced in NSW six months ago, and with other announced measures still to be introduced, NAAPA says it is far too early to conduct a meaningful evaluation.

Ahead of a public hearing to be held at Parliament House tomorrow, Mr Thorn says the Inquiry provides a valuable opportunity to put an effective evaluation framework in place.

"I would strongly caution the Committee against rushing to judgement, when the Government's full package of measures are yet to be introduced, when a full twelve months have not passed and when an evaluation framework has not even been established. The success of these measures can only be established with a robust evaluation of independent and trusted data, and not by relying on unsubstantiated alcohol industry claims," Mr Thorn said.

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The NSW and ACT Alcohol Policy Alliance (NAAPA) is an alliance of health and community organisations active across NSW and the ACT that has been formed with the objective of promoting action to reduce alcohol-related harms. The Coalition of NSW and ACT organisations has been formed to lobby and campaign for alcohol policy reform to reduce alcohol-related harms across the two jurisdictions. www.naapa.org.au

