

MEDIA RELEASE

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PUBS AND CLUBS MUST CLOSE EARLIER TO REDUCE ASSAULTS

New study shows small changes to opening hours result in large reductions in harm

The National Alliance for Action on Alcohol (NAAA), a coalition of 32 major health and community organisations from across Australia, is today calling on state and territory governments to unite and support earlier closing times for pubs and clubs.

The call follows results from a University of Newcastle study that proves this is an effective method to reduce alcohol-related assaults, published in the international scientific journal *Addiction* today.

Associate Professor Kypros Kypri found the 2008 restriction to 3.30am closing times and a 1.30am lock out for 14 pubs and clubs in Newcastle resulted in a 37 per cent reduction in assaults.

Assaults in the Newcastle CBD fell from an average 33 to 22 per month while the restrictions were in place, and did not change significantly in a neighbouring suburb where earlier closing times were not imposed by the state government.

Furthermore, 27 per cent of assaults occurred after 3am in the CBD before the intervention. This decreased to 12 per cent after the earlier closing times were in place and there was no increase in assaults earlier in the evening.

In response to these findings, the NAAA is calling for uniform liquor control regulations across Australia, by implementing consistent approaches to policing and enforcement of liquor laws, including:

- reducing outlet opening times and outlet density across the board, particularly for late-night and other high-risk outlets
- introducing accreditation requirements prior to the issuing of a liquor licence
- determining the appropriate conditions for new licences such as operating hours, noise restrictions and fees for cost recovery purposes
- requiring an annual liquor licence renewal subject to satisfactory compliance.

NAAA Chair Professor Mike Daube said: "Deregulation around Australia in recent years means that opening hours have become more relaxed and liquor licenses are generally cheaper, with the exception of Victoria. This is unacceptable considering alcohol related harm costs our community \$36 billion a year.

"As well as governments getting serious about this issue, industry must commit to finding the balance between commercial interests and community concerns about safety and the harms of binge drinking."

Australian Drug Foundation CEO John Rogerson said: "Last weekend's national Operation Unite police blitz resulted in 2,432 arrests relating to alcohol-fuelled crime and anti-social behaviour, 320 for assault. For a sustainable drop in violence after the police blitz, outlets will need to close earlier."

VicHealth CEO and NAAA Co-Chair Todd Harper added: "Importantly, this research builds on international evidence that restricting bottle shop trading hours is also an effective deterrent for alcohol abuse, particularly among young people. We hope that Australian governments seriously consider enforcing earlier closing times as a first step to reduce the many problems excessive alcohol use causes every weekend, in every town and city."

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NOTES TO EDITORS

*As of September 2010, the **National Alliance for Action on Alcohol** consists of 32 organisations from across Australia:*

Alcohol and Other Drugs Council of Australia (ADCA), Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Foundation (AERF), Alcohol Policy Coalition (Vic), Anglicare Australia, Australian Drug Foundation (ADF), Australasian Faculty of Public Health Medicine (AFPHEM), Australian Medical Association, Australian Health Promotion Association (AHPA), Australian National Council on Drugs (ANCD), Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY), Cancer Council Australia, Cancer Council Victoria, Diabetes Australia, DRUG ARM Australasia, Kidney Health Australia, National Drug & Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC), National Drug Research Institute (NDRI, Curtin University), National Heart Foundation, National Indigenous Drug and Alcohol Committee (NIDAC), Public Health Advocacy Institute (WA), Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA), Royal Australasian College of Physicians, Ted Noffs Foundation, Telethon Institute for Child Health Research, Turning Point Alcohol & Drug Centre, Uniting Church, VicHealth and university groups.