



**Submission to the Liquor & Gaming NSW evaluation of Kings
Cross alcohol sales data reporting requirement Discussion Paper**



April 2017

About the NSW ACT Alcohol Policy Alliance

The NSW ACT Alcohol Policy Alliance (NAAPA) aims to reduce alcohol harms by ensuring that evidence-based solutions inform alcohol policy discussions in New South Wales (NSW) and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). NAAPA currently has 48 member organisations from a range of fields including health, community, law enforcement, emergency services and research.

To contact the NAAPA secretariat email info@naapa.org.au or for more information about NAAPA visit www.naapa.org.au

The following are the NSW members of NAAPA:

- Network of Alcohol and Drug Agencies (NADA)
- Darlinghurst Resident Action Group (DRAG)
- Newcastle Community Drug Action Team
- Policy Association of NSW
- Australian Medical Association (AMA) NSW
- The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) NSW
- Public Health Association NSW Branch
- Cancer Council NSW
- National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC)
- Centre for Health Initiatives, University of Wollongong
- Hello Sunday Morning
- The Australasian College for Emergency Medicine (ACEM) NSW
- Jewish House
- Inspire Foundation
- The Asia Pacific Centre for Crime Prevention Griffith University (Sydney)
- University of Newcastle
- Ulladulla Community Drug Action Team
- Drug and Alcohol Research and Training Australia (DARTA)
- Bondi Residents Association
- Noffs Foundation (NSW)
- St Vincent's Hospital
- Australian Drug Foundation
- Health Services Union
- Pedestrian Council of Australia
- The Salvation Army NSW
- Awabakal Newcastle Aboriginal Co Operative Ltd
- The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) NSW
- Byron Bay Youth Service
- Law Enforcement Against Prohibition
- NSW Nurses and Midwives Association
- 2011 Residents Association
- Bondi beach precinct
- Last drinks in Byron
- CatholicCare Goulburn
- Mental Health Association of NSW
- The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) NSW
- The Potts Point and Kings Cross Heritage Conservation Society
- Thomas Kelly Youth Foundation
- Australian Salaried Medical Officer's Federation NSW (ASMOF NSW)

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Summary

The NSW ACT Alcohol Policy Alliance (NAAPA) welcomes the opportunity to provide comment on the *Liquor & Gaming NSW evaluation of Kings Cross alcohol sales data reporting requirement Discussion Paper* (Discussion Paper). NAAPA's submission supports the 2016 research report conducted by the Centre for Alcohol Policy Research (CAPR) on *Understanding Alcohol Sales Data in Australia* (2016 CAPR Report).ⁱ A copy of this report is enclosed for your reference.

While NAAPA appreciates that the Discussion Paper is an examination of the current Kings Cross precinct alcohol sales data collection, NAAPA maintains that state-wide alcohol sales data is the only appropriate and reliable collection method for the NSW Government.

Comprehensive and standardised alcohol sales data allows for better monitoring of alcohol availability and consumption. Alcohol harm is significant, resulting in more than 5,500 lives lost and 157,000 hospitalisations each year in Australia.ⁱⁱ In addition to the pain and suffering this causes, alcohol harm come at considerable expense costing the NSW Government an estimated \$1.03 billion each year.ⁱⁱⁱ

Increased availability of alcohol results in an increase in consumption, thereby increasing the risk of alcohol harm. Increased availability of alcohol is associated with an increase in assaults,^{iv} domestic violence,^{vi} road crashes,^{vii} child maltreatment,^{viii} and harmful consumption.^{ix} Addressing the harm associated with alcohol consumption will reduce the burden it places on public resources. Monitoring alcohol sales has been identified as a key strategy to manage alcohol harm.

The collection of alcohol sales data is important, as it is critical to informing policy, targeted prevention and resource management. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends sales data as the most reliable and accurate method for measuring alcohol consumption within communities.^{xi} State-wide sales data helps inform stakeholders and allows them to understand and compare significant health information relating to alcohol. It is this accurate representation of consumption trends through state-wide data, that is invaluable to evidence-based alcohol policy. It enables the implementation of targeted reforms and is crucial for monitoring and evaluation.

NSW is the only state or territory not collecting or committed to collecting state-wide alcohol sales data. Only on-premises licensees within the Kings Cross precinct that trade after 8pm are required to report data on their retail alcohol sales. By collecting state-wide data rather than the Kings Cross precinct alone, NSW will be aligned with other states and territories making for better national data collection and analysis.

There is no clear purpose for the Kings Cross alcohol sales data collection project, making the process burdensome on retailers and of no use to key stakeholders. The Discussion Paper asks for comment on the *"availability and usefulness of the data to stakeholders"*. Currently the data is unavailable to stakeholders and therefore useless. Furthermore, the data is not representative due to its small sample size and limited geographical scope. The project is concerned only with a high alcohol consumption, entertainment precinct, thereby rendering the data useless in offering any information on NSW per capita consumption. It ignores valuable sales data information from other areas of Sydney as well as other cities and regional areas within NSW. It also fails to recognise the importance of sales data from online and take-away liquor outlets. This is a concern given that 80 per cent of alcohol is sold at packaged liquor outlets.^{xii}

The current collection method lacks purpose, representativeness and scope. In order to overcome these shortcomings, NAAPA recommends that the NSW Government collect alcohol sales data in line with the recommendations of the National Drug Research Institute (NDRI) and the 2016 CAPR Report.

The review of the Kings Cross alcohol sales data project should assist Liquor & Gaming NSW in establishing a standardised, state-wide collection method. Any shortcomings of the Kings Cross project should not be used as an excuse to cease alcohol sales data collection altogether, but rather as key considerations for future projects. The lack of state-wide data is impeding the licensing and planning processes within NSW, as the local geographical impacts from alcohol outlets cannot be accurately quantified. It is evident that there is a clear necessity for state-wide data collection.

Submission Format

The NAAPA submission should be read in conjunction with the Liquor & Gaming NSW Discussion Paper and the 2016 CAPR Report.

NAAPA's response will comment on three key areas:

1. Purpose of the current Kings Cross alcohol sales data project
2. Availability and usefulness of the Kings Cross alcohol sales data project
3. The case for state-wide data collection

NAAPA supports the collection of alcohol sales data in order to reduce the costs associated with alcohol harm.

Recommendations

- i. That the NSW Government outline a clearly defined objective for the Kings Cross alcohol sales data project.
- ii. That the NSW Government develop a report and publish the Kings Cross alcohol sales data that has been collected. This report should be used to guide the implementation of state-wide collection.
- iii. That the NSW Government collect state-wide wholesale and producer alcohol sales data at the transaction level detailing alcohol type, volume and cost, as well as the purchasers' retail licence number.
- iv. That the NSW Government implement state-wide alcohol sales data reporting that allows it to participate in the National Alcohol Sales Data Project.
- v. That the NSW Government explores opportunities to make retail alcohol sales data reporting easier and implement these changes state-wide.

1. Purpose of the current Kings Cross alcohol sales data project

The current Kings Cross alcohol sales data project is severely lacking a clearly defined policy rationale. There are a number of challenges with the current reporting system, specifically the lack of a clear purpose for the data collection. In December 2013, the NSW Government passed legislation mandating all venues licensed to trade after 8pm in the Kings Cross precinct, record the amount and type of alcohol sold between 8pm and 5am. The collection of alcohol sales data was included in the Kings Cross precinct plan of management. The Discussion Paper states that:

The objectives of the alcohol sales data reporting requirement are to:

- *Help shape compliance efforts by the NSW Police and L&GNSW, and*
- *Inform future policy decisions by the Government in relation to the Kings Cross precinct*

However, it is not evident that these objectives are being met. There is limited information on how the sales data is being used and what purpose it is serving. It is unknown if the information collected is being used to inform policy development and shared among government agencies, in particular NSW Health. It is also unclear why Liquor & Gaming NSW are collecting alcohol sales data only from the Kings Cross precinct.

Recommendation:

- i. **That the NSW Government outline a clearly defined objective for the Kings Cross alcohol sales data project.**

2. Availability and usefulness of the Kings Cross alcohol sales data project

The alcohol sales data from Kings Cross venues is not publicly available. The Discussion Paper states “*Liquor & Gaming NSW has not published the data to date due to commercial and privacy requirements*”. These limitations surrounding privacy can be overcome by publishing de-identified data. Specific venue details are not fundamental to overall policy development.

The lack of information surrounding the Kings Cross alcohol sales data project renders the data useless. Transparency and availability of data is key to policy development and research. Transparency reflects the commitment to credibility and increases output legitimacy.^{xiii} It also helps with compliance as licensees can see what is happening to the data they are providing to regulators.

Reliable alcohol sales data provides valuable health information on consumption levels and patterns.^{xiv} However, the current method does not provide such information. It is not representative as it only looks at a small area that is a high alcohol consumption area, with a diverse demographic of individuals that come from all over the city, state, country and overseas. This means that you cannot discern any informative patterns based on demographic or geographical area, thereby limiting the usefulness of the data in guiding alcohol policy and research.

Furthermore, gathering data from only on-premises licensees ignores important evidence about major suppliers, as well as the countless number of purchases occurring online and through packaged liquor stores. This is vital information as almost 80 per cent of alcohol consumed in Australia is sold at packaged liquor outlets.^{xv} By excluding this information the data is limited and not helpful in guiding research or developing evidence-based alcohol policy.

Despite the ineffectiveness of the Kings Cross alcohol sales data, lessons can be learnt from the project to help guide the implementation of standardised state-wide data collection.

Recommendation:

- ii. **That the NSW Government develop a report and publish the alcohol sales data that has been collected. This report should be used to guide the implementation of state-wide collection.**

3. The case for state-wide data collection

NSW is the only state or territory not collecting or committed to collecting state-wide data on alcohol sales. Alcohol sales data is the gold standard recommendation of WHO for measuring alcohol consumption within communities. ^{xvi} Self-reported survey data has been found to be incredibly inaccurate, accounting for less than 50 per cent of consumption. ^{xvii} Reliable estimates of alcohol consumption at the local level is crucial for monitoring, policy development and evaluation, targeting and program planning. ^{xviii} It is critical that all Australian states and territories, including NSW, gather consistent and reliable state-wide alcohol sales data.

Wholesale data collection

Prior to 1996, state-wide wholesale alcohol sales data collection was mandatory for all states and territories. ^{xix} Once collection became optional only the Northern Territory (NT), Queensland and Western Australia (WA) chose to continue collection. Legislation requiring the collection of wholesale data was reintroduced in the Australia Capital Territory (ACT) in July 2012, Victoria in July 2015 and Tasmania in September 2016. ^{xx} In November 2016 the South Australian (SA) Government committed to introducing similar collection methods. ^{xxi} This leaves NSW as the only state or territory not collecting or committed to collecting state-wide wholesale alcohol sales data (Table 1).

Table 1: Summary of state-wide alcohol sales data collection by jurisdiction

	Reported By	Frequency of Reporting
NSW	No state-wide data	No state-wide data
QLD	Wholesale licensees, liquor producers, wine producers and merchants	Annually
NT	Wholesalers	Quarterly
VIC	Wholesalers and producers (with small producers exempt)	Annually
WA	Wholesalers and producers	Annually
ACT	Off premise licensees who sell liquor by wholesale	Annually
TAS	Wholesalers and producers	Unknown
SA	Committed to collecting wholesale data	Unknown

Collection of alcohol sales data from all wholesale and producer liquor licence holders across NSW will allow for better per capita consumption estimates across the state. Such estimates will assist in identifying emerging trends to support evidence-based policy, regulation and service delivery, as well as provide an objective measure for evaluating alcohol policy initiatives. It will also assist policy makers to analyse trends and understand the magnitude of alcohol’s impact. ^{xxii}

Collection of state-wide wholesale data will also enable NSW to participate in NDRI’s National Alcohol Sales Data Project. The Project collects wholesale alcohol sales data from the majority of jurisdictions, and contains the most recognised, up-to-date and reliable source of information available in relation to alcohol sales in Australia. ^{xxiii} State-wide reporting by licensees should follow the recommendations of NDRI and the 2016 CAPR report. At a minimum, this should include annual reporting of

transaction-level sales data detailing type of alcohol, volume and price.^{xxiv} The NSW Government should detail the findings and data in an annual report, which should be made publicly available.

It is critical that Liquor & Gaming NSW consider ways that alcohol sales data collection can reliably and accurately occur across NSW. When retail sales data to the public is unavailable, transaction level wholesale data to retailers acts as a good proxy.^{xxv} As a first step, the NSW Government must broaden the scope of data collection to account for wholesalers and producers across NSW.

Recommendation

- i. **That the NSW Government collect state-wide wholesale and producer alcohol sales data at the transaction level detailing alcohol type, volume and cost as well as the purchasers' retail licence number.**
- ii. **That the NSW Government implement state-wide alcohol sales data reporting that allows it to participate in the National Alcohol Sales Data Project.**

Retail data collection

The WHO *International Guide for Monitoring Alcohol Consumption* states that retail sales data presents more logistical challenges but is the most accurate representation of per capita alcohol consumption.^{xxvi} Retail sales data captures the moment alcohol is sold to the public and is the most timely and detailed record of alcohol consumption levels.

Despite retail sales being the most accurate representation of alcohol consumption, there is currently no representative data of retail liquor purchases in Australia. Alcohol sales data at the retail level is lacking globally and collection of such data would strengthen the NDRI project.^{xxvii}

While the Kings Cross methods are thorough and comprehensive, the collection of this data lacks purpose. A clear policy rationale for collection of this data will allow for better understanding and compliance among licensees. NAAPA anticipates that Liquor & Gaming NSW will receive submissions from members of the alcohol industry asserting the abolition of alcohol sales data collection. The NSW Government must ensure that this does not happen and ensure that consideration is given to improving and strengthening data collection.

Streamlining reporting requirements needs to be considered. It has been indicated by some venues that the Kings Cross reporting is too onerous. However, the 2016 CAPR report indicated that some businesses already collect daily sales data for administrative or taxation purposes and others use software systems, which provide sales figures by the minute, thereby reducing the likely burden on businesses.^{xxviii} An online database or recording system could streamline the collection and analysis of data.

Furthermore, concerns regarding commercial and privacy requirements can be addressed by limiting the public availability of data to geographical units, such as postcodes, thereby providing anonymity to individual venues whilst simultaneously providing detailed data for policy evaluation. Retail level data provides better real time information regarding consumption at a local level, as wholesale data can introduce a time lag, due to the increased possibility that the goods are not consumed in their year of purchase.^{xxix} In order to gather the most informative and representative data, the NSW Government must consider less burdensome alternatives for collecting state-wide retail sales data.

Future NSW alcohol retail sales data collection methods should ensure that all licence types are incorporated, including online and packaged liquor sales.

The NSW Government must consider new methods for retail data collection in order to gather the most accurate information on alcohol consumption within NSW.

Recommendation

- iii. That the NSW Government explores opportunities to make retail alcohol sales data reporting easier and implement these changes state-wide.**

Conclusions

Accurate and reliable collection of state-wide wholesale and retail alcohol sales data will enable NSW to pave the way for a national standard of alcohol sales data. By collecting and publishing this data consistently and in line with the National Alcohol Sales Data Project, the NSW Government can better shape evidence based policy, monitor consumption, target specific communities and better plan responses. These recommendations provided by NAAPA enable:

- Better comparisons between alcohol harm and consumption levels
- The implementation of more responsive alcohol policies
- The identification of problem areas
- Better responses through the planning and allocation of public resources
- Analyses of beverage specific consumption by area and time
- Proper evaluation of alcohol consumption related policies and targeted interventions

The current lack of state-wide data is impeding the licensing and planning processes, as the local geographical impacts from alcohol outlets cannot be accurately quantified. Alcohol is one of the leading risk factors for chronic illness. It is completely preventable and contributes to a significant proportion of the global burden of disease. Additionally, alcohol contributes to the social burden through numerous means of alcohol-related harm including reduced workforce productivity, public violence, traffic accidents and family and domestic violence.

If the NSW Government disregards the collection of reliable, accessible and quality state-wide alcohol sales data, they will be neglecting the countless social, economic and health impacts that alcohol consumption has on our community.

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ISBN 978-0-9954370-7-4