



MEDIA RELEASE

NSW GOVT BULLDOZES COMMUNITY SAFEGUARDS UNDER GUISE OF LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

22 August 2018: The New South Wales Government is recklessly trampling community safeguards under the guise of a routine legislative update, according to the state's public health and medical experts.

The warning comes ahead of today's Liquor & Gaming NSW *2018 Regulatory Roundtable* in Sydney, with the NSW/ACT Alcohol Policy Alliance (NAAPA) highly critical of the proposed changes to the *Liquor Regulation*, calling the process 'unclear, misleading and constrained'.

Of greatest concern is the proposed effective removal of the Community Impact Statement requirement for liquor licence applicants. NAAPA is calling on Liquor & Gaming NSW not to proceed with proposed changes to the Community Impact Statement until the findings of the Government's separate review into the system of community impact assessments are released.

Dr John Crozier, Chair of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons Trauma Committee and NAAPA spokesperson says the NSW Government's determination to further weaken legal obligations on liquor license applicants to fully consider and report on any likely negative social impacts is deeply concerning.

"This is death by a thousand cuts with a government unwilling to prioritise public and police safety over alcohol industry, pub and club profits. Local NSW communities are being wilfully deprived of an informed, equal and fair say in problematic alcohol outlet proposals very likely to have an adverse impact upon their families' health, safety and welfare." Dr Crozier said.

"We have seen too many large Dan Murphy's placed too close to schools and disadvantaged vulnerable communities. The explosion in packaged and on-line packaged liquor licenses is of grave concern because those outlets drive an increase in alcohol-fuelled family violence and sexual assaults."

Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) Director of Policy and Research, Trish Hepworth agrees and says the review process undertaken by the NSW Government has been as troubling as it is flawed.

"We are appalled at the lack of time and consultation given to key community stakeholders during this review, which has been unclear, misleading and rushed. The NSW Government's desire to water down and remove modest protection measures is fraught with danger," Ms Hepworth said.

Ms Hepworth is dismayed at the proposal to remove the Community Impact Statement and in turn, silence the views of local residents from the review.

“Residents see and experience first-hand the problems in their community, and as such, the government should be trying to make it easier for those concerns to be considered, not trying to silence them.”

In its submission to the review, NAAPA has called for a number of improvements within the liquor regulation to help minimise alcohol harm.

Key recommendations include a more comprehensive definition of alcohol harm related to the sale, supply, promotion and consumption of alcohol. Those changes would ensure regulation considers the risk of harm to children, vulnerable people and communities, and would also address domestic violence and anti-social behaviour occurring within and outside licensed premises and bottle shops.

NAAPA has also called for greater transparency in the liquor licencing process.

NAAPA recommends shifting the responsibility for regulating liquor licensing from the Department of Industry to a department not focussed on business interests in order to secure input from health and emergency services, community members and local government, so the community is assured that public health and safety remain the paramount priority.

Trish Hepworth and Dr Crozier are available for interview.

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The NSW 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



The Royal Australasian
College of Physicians