



Media release
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Australian study shows restrictions to pub closing hours reduces assaults

New research conducted by the University of Newcastle in Australia found that restricting pub closing hours in the Newcastle Central Business District (CBD) reduced the assault rate by 37 percent.

The study, now published in the international scientific journal *Addiction*, reveals the number of assaults in the Newcastle CBD fell from 33 before the restrictions were put in place, to 22 afterwards.

Pubs and clubs were required to close at 3.30am and to implement a one-way door policy from 1.30am to prevent more patrons from entering the venue.

Alcohol Healthwatch Director Rebecca Williams says the research strengthens existing evidence that earlier closing times can effectively reduce alcohol-related harm and is critical of the Government's decision not to enforce the same restrictions here.

"Despite recommendations by the Law Commission, the Government's recent proposals for alcohol law reform do not include a one-way door policy as it could 'reduce the profitability of on-licenses.' They will also put exemptions in place to extend the maximum trading hours for special occasions and allow local alcohol plans to reduce or extend trading hours.

"The government's proposals will leave us with huge inconsistencies. There is little point in having "maximum trading hours" unless they are mandatory," says Ms Williams.

"The Government continues to ignore evidence and best practice putting commercial interests ahead of community health and safety."

The team of researchers, led by Associate Professor Kypros Kypri, also compared the Newcastle CBD assault rates with those in the nearby suburb of Hamilton, where pubs were not subject to the restrictions.

"It is a common belief that restricting closing times just shifts the problem to a neighbouring area or to an earlier time. We tested this displacement hypothesis and found no such effect. Further, we found evidence of reduced assaults before the 3.30am closing as well," Professor Kypri said.

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