

Record of Public Drinking Workshop

Held Wednesday 2nd August 2:00 – 3:30pm



1. Purpose

To understand and explore the intended and unintended impacts of a range of harm minimisation strategies relating to public drinking.

2. Participants

Stuart Bailey	Acting Port Phillip Police Area Inspector	Victoria Police
Jason Kelly	Port Phillip Police Area Inspector	Victoria Police
Karla Challis	Acting Senior Sergeant - Drug and Alcohol Strategy Unit	Victoria Police
Phillip Green	Superintendent	Victoria Police
Jordan Crugnale	Acting Program Manager - Engagement Hub	Prahran Mission
Vicki Taylor	Paharan Mission Support Worker	Prahran Mission
Heather Holst	Deputy CEO and Director of Services and Housing	Launch Housing
Andrew D'Arcy	GM Getting Housing	Launch Housing
Michael Savic	Research Fellow (Addiction Studies)	Monash University/Turning Point
Carol Jeffs	General Manager Community Development	Port Phillip City Council
Pam Newton	Manager Community Health and Service Planning	Port Phillip City Council
Sharyn Cox	Senior Health and Safety Policy Officer - Health Equity and Social Justice	Port Phillip City Council
Lili James	Manager Safety and Amenity	Port Phillip City Council
Cr Tim Baxter	Cr Tim Baxter	Port Phillip City Council
Cr Katherine Copsey	Cr Katherine Copsey	Port Phillip City Council
Cr Ogy Simic	Cr Ogy Simic	Port Phillip City Council
Cr Dick Gross	Cr Dick Gross	Port Phillip City Council
Cr Louise Crawford	Cr Louise Crawford	Port Phillip City Council
Cr Bernadene Voss	Cr Bernadene Voss	Port Phillip City Council
Cr Andrew Bond	Cr Andrew Bond	Port Phillip City Council
David Taylor	Policy and Media Officer	Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association (VAADA)
Karen Hall	AOD Case Worker	Windana

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3. Objectives

- To facilitate a multidisciplinary approach to the issue.
- To be informed of research, barriers and issue resolution within other inner urban LGAs.
- To feel confident to make an informed future decision to address public drinking.

4. Measures of Success

Workshop participants engaged in two rounds of conversations to identify measures of success from the viewpoint of a range of stakeholders. The measures of success chosen the group as most important are highlighted.

Local Service Providers and Clients

- Reduction in assaults
- **Feeling safe and confident (staff and clients)**
- Feel welcome (staff and clients)
- Services can really make a difference
- Reduced complexity to work (alcohol and other drugs add another layer to the work)
- Staff feel safe
- Clients are able to access services – don't have to be on the street
- Client centred approach – all services working together
- People no longer sleeping rough
- Not having to deal with threatening dangerous behaviours
- **Clients are engaged in healthier activities**
- People can be linked into services and on a better pathway
- Clients have real choices in services
- **No unfair discrimination against clients**
- **No unfair labelling**

Visitors

- Safely return
- Feel safe whilst visiting
- Able to recommend Carlisle Street as a meeting place
- Visit more often
- **Friendly, vibrant and colourful atmosphere**
- Vulnerable and marginalised people are supported
- High perception of safety
- Positive cultural experience (not bland)
- Safe and not intimidating
- Wanting to have a pleasant experience
- **Refer other visitors to the area**
- Be able to use alcohol to party
- **Use and access the entertainment precinct/venue/destination for fun** (which may include public drinking at the park or beach)
- Keep diversity – can bring or meet anyone in the area
- Wanting to stay and feel safe and engage with trade and shops
- Safety – being able to go to a new precinct and feeling safe and comfortable

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Traders

- Customers are not intimidated
- **Customers and staff feel safe**
- Business is not affected
- Dealing with drinkers behaviour
- Want to make money
- Want no impediments to business
- Get rid of offensive people and behaviours
- Thriving, busy, diverse street
- Feelings of safety
- People wanting to stay in the street and engage with services
- Staff feeling safe to come to work, safe, inclusive, environment is diverse
- Perceptions of safety
- Reduced shoplifting and theft
- **Good relationship with all users of the street**
- Positive vibrant amenity
- **People want to come to the street and spend time and money**
- **Enhanced village character and sense of community**
- Feel and be safe
- Carry on their business and focus on their customers and village
- Improved clarity on role, responsibility and function (ie who can I contact to resolve issues?)
- Amenity – pleasure in visiting and experiencing the area
- **Licensing – serving and selling alcohol to not impact the amenity**
- Popularity of area – want people to come – Carlisle St ‘the place to be’
- Attract all demographics – including kids

Residents

- **Maintain a culturally lively atmosphere**
- Want to drink alcohol at celebrations
- Don't want to be bothered by 'ugly' behaviour
- Some are scared
- Want to feel safe and not threatened
- Not impact on kids
- To go about the streets safely when shopping, commuting
- **Quiet enjoyment of area**
- Amenity in terms of noise and litter
- **Safe**
- Peaceful
- Understanding the complexity of issues
- Access to public spaces
- Feeling safe to access to transport to/from home
- Feel safe
- **All people are respected and cared for**
- Kids can walk to school safely
- Not to be exposed to alcohol affected people
- **Issue is addressed and not relocated**
- A harmonious society where people are looked after
- If someone is drinking unsafely/excessively I want to make sure that there are support services and a safety net to help people overcome their predicament.
- Tram stop not full of rubbish
- Not hassled
- Kids to get to school on their own
- Respect for all people

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Police/Law Enforcement

- Improved community safety outcomes evidenced by decreased crime, particularly crimes against the person
- Improved clarity on role, function and responsibility (who does what and why)
- Improved community guardianship, an improved community partnership working together toward an agreed end goal
- **Resource adjustment – aligning resource allocation so that police spend time when, where they're needed and wanted**
- Zero harm – safety first
- Improved safety outcomes for community and police
- **Crime statistics are reduced**
- Community approval is increased
- Want a quieter life and want the powers to make that happen
- Want a proactive role – **prevent harm**
- **Want to meet community expectations**
- Improve safety
- Reduced or no complaints from traders or general community about alcohol issues
- All agencies work together and know their roles
- Full compliance with regulations, state and local laws
- Timely responses to issues and reports
- No repeat offenders
- People feel safe
- **Increased perception of safety**
- Defend public rights
- Accessible services
- **Effective management of individuals (pathways to services, prevention of harm)**

People Who are Drinking

- **Feel safe**
- Inclusion
- Understanding of constraints
- Feel welcome
- Reduction of fines
- Shelter – safe public spaces
- Improved facilities
- Keep drinking
- Prevent and avoid withdrawals
- Avoiding personal issues
- Find somewhere to live (or at least belong)
- **Enjoy the company of others** and have friends
- Free low cost consumption of alcohol
- Safety in a public place – not attacked or cornered
- No shame and voice has meaning
- **Feeling part of the community and connected in a positive and meaningful manner**
- **Equal voice – not feeling disempowered**
- Provide people with a voice and be able to be heard
- Understand my past and possible trauma
- Where to go when want support
- Able to access support and services they may need
- Invisibility
- **Not unfairly targeted** when harming no one
- Not displaced

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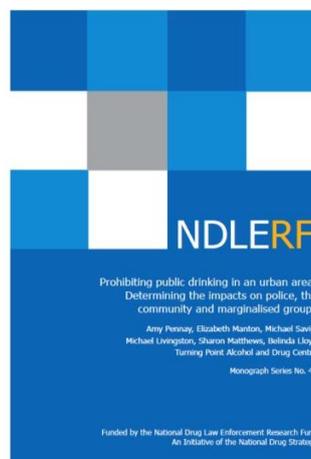
5. The Evidence Regarding Public Drinking Laws in Metro Melbourne

Dr Michael Savic from Turning Point Drug and Alcohol Centre and Monash University presented the findings of the research titled *'Prohibiting public drinking in an urban area: Determining the impacts on police, the community and marginalised groups'*. This research was funded by the National Drug Law Enforcement Research Fund (NDLERF). The full research paper is publically available at <http://www.ndlerf.gov.au/sites/default/files/publication-documents/monographs/monograph49.pdf>.

What does the research tell us about the impacts of prohibiting public drinking? Lessons from the evaluation of public drinking laws in three LGAs

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1. Monash University; 2. Turning Point, Eastern Health
3. Centre for Alcohol Policy Research, La Trobe University.



A review of 16 public drinking evaluations (Pennay & Room, 2012) found:

- Improve perceptions of safety among the community
- Improve the amenity of an area
- Are supported by the community
- They are inconsistently enforced
- Public drinking laws result in negative impacts to marginalised groups (e.g. displacement, fines etc.)
- No strong evidence that public drinking bans:
 - Reduce alcohol-related crime or harm
 - Reduce the visibility of street drinking
 - Are understood and adhered to

Background

- Public drinking laws have proliferated over the past 10 years.
- In Victoria they are local government laws
- Public drinking laws are often implemented to target drinking around night-time entertainment districts
- In other areas they are implemented to target congregations of socio-economically disadvantaged drinkers – i.e. City of Darebin, Maribyrnong.
- Public drinking laws are highly political

Aims

- The objectives of this project were threefold:
- To evaluate the **implementation** of the prohibition of public drinking in the three LGAs
 - To evaluate the **effectiveness** of the prohibition of public drinking in the three LGAs in reducing alcohol-related crime and harm and improving safety and amenity
 - To evaluate the **impact** of the prohibition of public drinking in the three LGAs on a range of target groups, including police, residents, drinkers, traders and other local stakeholders.

Evaluation methods

1. MEDIA ANALYSIS
2. DAY & NIGHT OBSERVATIONS (80 HOURS)
3. SURVEY OF RESIDENTS (n=1,681)
4. QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS WITH DRINKERS (n=23), POLICE, TRADERS, & STAKEHOLDERS (n=54)
5. FOCUS GROUPS WITH RESIDENTS (n=24)
6. ANALYSIS OF AMBULANCE ATTENDANCES & ASSAULTS OVER 10 YEARS

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Yarra

- Municipality-wide public spaces (with some parks exempted)
- Indigenous drinkers Smith St, Collingwood
- Protocol for sensitive enforcement with marginalised groups



Darebin

- Applies in two hotspots (shopping precincts)
- Specific groups of older ethnically diverse street drinkers congregated in these areas
- Concurrent outreach



Maribyrnong

- Applies in main shopping precinct
- Street drinking an ongoing concern despite law being in place for over 10 years



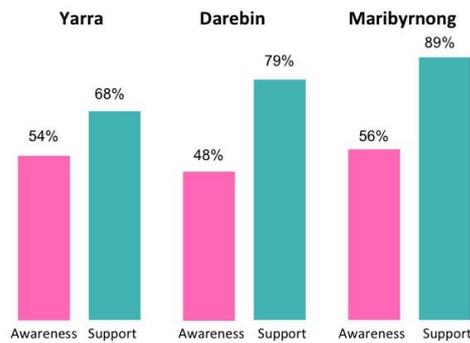
Implementation

- Public drinking laws have proliferated partly in response to increasing gentrification and growing socio-economic disparity.
- Police, traders and Councillors are the key actors responsible for the implementation of public drinking laws
- Police adopt a range of approaches, from warnings and directing drinkers to tip their drinks out (most common) to frequent and aggressive issuing of infringements to 'repeat offenders'.
- Approximately 100 fines per year issued in Maribyrnong. A total of 59 in three years in Darebin and 52 in two years in Yarra.
- Targeted outreach models have shown some evidence of success.

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Resident awareness and support



Effectiveness

Perceptions of safety and amenity

- Significant improvements pre- and post- the law in all three LGAs in relation to feeling safer and less bothered by urination, vomiting, etc.

Visibility of drinkers

- Mixed effectiveness – reduction in some LGAs, not all.

Reduction in alcohol-related harm

- No evidence of change in ambulance attendances pre- and post- the law.

Reduction in alcohol-related crime

- Small drops in two LGAs post the law – but only one time point is available.

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Impacts

Drinkers

- Negative outcomes for marginalised drinkers including social, cultural, legal, economic and health impacts (Pennay et al., 2014; Manton et al., 2014)
- Displacement effects and anecdotally more harms associated with 'at-home' drinking.
- Health workers less able to access drinkers and escort them to medical, housing, legal appointments.

Other stakeholders

- Residents feel safer and perceive improvements in amenity.
- Traders are satisfied.

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Conclusions

- It is not possible to make a definitive judgement as to whether public drinking laws are effective or ineffective
- The findings are mixed as to whether public drinking laws reduce congregations of drinkers
- No evidence that they reduce alcohol-related crime or harm
- But they do make residents feel safer and improve perceptions of the amenity of an area.
- Given the high level of public support for public drinking laws, their continued application is inevitable
- Given the negative impacts to drinkers, it is important that they are carefully considered, implemented and enforced, and are coupled with community-specific social inclusion strategies.

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Recommendations

- Public drinking laws should remain the discretion of local councils
- Punitive measures are not an appropriate way to deal with a social problem. A warning system is the most adequate enforcement approach to ensure that disadvantaged groups are not further marginalised.
- It is important that there is no discriminatory application of public drinking laws and we recommend that police pay more attention to enforcing public drinking laws near and around licensed venues at night.
- To minimise any negative impacts of public drinking laws on drinkers, it is crucial to establish concurrent activities:
 - Providing increased outreach support to public drinkers
 - Increasing health care services for drinkers, particularly culturally specific outreach, detoxification and other alcohol and drug treatment programs
 - Reducing access to alcohol

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Other innovative options that could be considered

- Formal or informal 'Wet houses' or 'Wet Zones'?
 - Implemented in the UK but untested in Australia (Crane & Warnes, 2003; Davies, 2006)
 - Not politically palatable
 - Reinforces an 'us' (non street drinkers) & 'them' (street drinkers) mentality (Pennay et al., 2014)
- Encourage the shared use of key hotspots and create an atmosphere of acceptance, inclusion and conviviality:
 - Running festivals, markets and other events targeted at a broad population
 - Providing grants or other types of assistance to traders to fund shop front improvements and higher quality street furniture
 - Paying for graffiti removal and syringe sweeps
 - Providing attractive shared spaces (Pennay et al., 2014)

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Limitations

- The household survey had a very low response rate (12.3%), meaning that the findings are limited in their generalisability.
- A random white pages sample is not representative of the population. The household sample over-represented females, older people, people with university qualifications and retirees. It missed non-English speaking residents.
- With the exception of police and ambulance data, no pre-law data were available to compare the results to. Changes 'before the law' and 'after the law' relied on memory and this is subject to limitations of recall bias.
- We were unable to run a time series analysis on police data given that only annual data was available for assault offences that were flagged as being associated with alcohol.
- Ambulance and police data analyses were run at the LGA level due to a small number of cases and confidentiality issues and in Darebin and Maribyrnong the public drinking laws only applied to small areas.

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- Victoria Police for facilitating access to data.

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6. An Integrated Approach

Through small group discussion, the group considered recommendations for action. It was made clear that the group was restricted to making recommendations that were:

1. Within the influence and authority of participants
2. Evidenced based
3. Can be resourced / available capacity to respond in this way

Ideas that each small group prioritised are presented in bold text.

How can we best support harm minimisation in related to alcohol consumption in public?

- Community activities are offered that create social inclusion
- Forums, community education, learning for traders and their staff
- Including people drinking in consultations
- Outreach services – partnerships with agencies
- Increase opportunities for ‘meaningful daily activity’ such as community programs and meals programs
- **Collaborative diversion program** – police and services offering a joint response
- **Clear regulatory and support structure**
- Trust enforcement processes not to fine and arrest
- Municipal wide approach
- **Provide a safe area to drink** – safer for consumer and public (place, security and public support)
- Greater engagement of agencies with people drinking on the streets
- Target those impacting negatively on the amenity
- Respond to drug issues
- Timely responses to violent or drug related incidents
- Be clear about the problem we are trying to solve (strategy chosen must have clear measures for success and a plan to monitor and evaluation the outcomes)
- Understand limitations of people who are street drinking (who are they? What are their challenges? What are their rights and entitlements?)
- **Utilisation of Victoria Police referral system** – for drinkers there would be health benefits and for police it would be a good use of resources
- Drinkers (and other marginalised groups) remain in the public eye for natural surveillance
- Responsible service of alcohol – further understand the role of packaged liquor outlets
- **Applying a multiagency team to support those affected with a greater outreach presence** (single number and MOU in place)
- Ensure there is an effective support service regardless of laws
- Proactive presence (community policing) to promote respectful public behaviour whether drinking or not
- **Services share information and coordinate active outreach for a client centred approach**
- **Revise the streetscape, space and activity activation**
- Community building activities and homelessness education
- Placing drinkers first
- **Creating a safe place to drink** (trailing a wet zone drinking program)
- Ensuring services are available
- Implement a trial public drinking ban – hotspots?
- **Multidisciplinary approach to support a trial**
- A comprehensive approach
- Town Hall forecourt ‘wet area’