



Response to WA Police Report
'Is Your House in Order? Re-visiting Liquor Licensing Practises and the Establishment of an Entertainment Precinct in Northbridge'

Prepared for

WA Nightclub Association (WANA)

October, 2009

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Executive Summary

Coakes Consulting has been commissioned by the Western Australian Nightclub Association (WANA) to undertake a Social Assessment for the Northbridge Precinct in response to the WA Police report titled 'Is Your House in Order? Re-visiting Liquor Licensing Practises and the Establishment of an Entertainment Precinct in Northbridge', hereafter referred to as the Police report.

This report presents the findings of the social assessment, including:

- A brief background as to the purpose of the report, detailing the Police report and State Government policy proposals.
- An overview of the methodology employed as part of the collection, collation and analysis of data.
- A social profile of Northbridge, outlining the socio-demographic characteristics of the community.
- A critical review of the Police report and independent analysis of the report findings.
- Independent research into alcohol related incidents in WA and interstate.
- Examination of a number of relevant case studies from around Australia as a means of identifying learning's from other contexts to address similar issues to the WA context.
- Analysis of the impacts of the proposed changes to nightclub trading hours.
- A number of proposed holistic measures to address the issues in Northbridge.

Social Assessment Methods

The range of methods and mechanisms used to collect data and information relating to the Police report included a secondary data review, a media analysis and analysis of social indicators, using ABS data. Further assessment was undertaken of the relevant case studies from around Australia, and a critical analysis of the Police report was conducted.



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Summary of Police Report

The Police report outlines the extent of alcohol-related problems in Northbridge and argues in favour of legislative change designed to restrict the availability of alcohol in the area. Specifically, the report makes the following recommendations:

- “Special Facility Licenses (SFLs) and Extended Trading Permits (ETPs) [should be] wound back to midnight, as this would allow patrons to move on to a nightclub or utilise public transport in order to get home,”.
- “Consideration should be given to winding back the closing time of Nightclub licenses [from 6:00am] to 3:00am, as this would allow sufficient time for the precinct to be rejuvenated ready for morning trade” (WA Police Report, p. 35).

Independent Findings

The following is a brief summary of the key points made in this report:

- The evidence presented in the Police report to illustrate the relationship between nightclub hours and alcohol-related problems is inconclusive, and in several cases misinterpreted. For instance, a sharp increase in “disorderly conduct offences” and “offences against the person” occurring in conjunction with an increase in policing strategies is interpreted to mean the additional policing has failed. However, this increase in offences (which must be detected in order to be recorded) is more likely to reflect the increased police presence, and could instead be described as a success.
- Furthermore, **actual assault incidents (as opposed to offences against the person, which include robbery) in Northbridge have decreased in the last two years**, while assaults in some other popular nightspots have increased sharply.
- Data in the Police report indicates 73.6% of alcohol-related incidents occur between 11pm and 3am, compared to only 19.7% of incidents between 3am and 7pm. This finding is supported by research published in academic journals. If this is the case, then it follows logically to target all venues operating within these hours, rather than only nightclubs operating after 3am.
- WA Police collect data on the “place of last drink” before alcohol-related incidents, which can be reported at the levels of license type or specific venue. In their report, the Police only reported place of last drink data under the combined category of “licensed premises” and refused to grant permission to Coakes Consulting for their independent comment on the disaggregated data.
- As such, **Coakes Consulting was required to source disaggregated data from NSW, which plainly demonstrates that certain license categories are more at risk of alcohol-related violence**. Hotels, in particular, have an exceptionally high



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number of assaults occurring on their premises, relative to the number of hotels in total. Nightclubs, on the other hand, accounted for only 5.7% of all assaults.

- Furthermore, **the NSW data indicates that only a handful of specific venues are responsible for a high level of violence, while the overwhelming majority have one or less assault incidents every two years.** This data suggests that specific venues should be regarded as problematic and targeted appropriately, while other venues that do not contribute to the problem could instead be recognised for their strong safety performance.
- **The evidence presented in the Police report does not justify *selectively and unfairly* targeting the later hours in which nightclubs operate over other periods, as the majority of incidents occur in other license categories between midnight and 2am in the morning.**
- The authors of the report emphasise there are currently seven venues operating under Extended Trading Permits (ETPs) and nine under Special Facility Licenses (SFLs) during the most problematic time period (in some cases operating until 3am), and notes that the recent increase in the concentration of such venues “perpetuates a ‘high-risk’ drinking environment.” **The authors’ recommendation to reduce nightclub hours is made secondary to their primary recommendation to reduce the number of venues operating after midnight under ETPs,** and not specifically for the purpose of lowering crime rates.
- There are likely to be a number of social and economic consequences associated with a reduction of nightclub operating hours, the impact of which should be thoroughly considered prior to imposing significant change on the community.

Recommendations

From the critical analysis of the Police data as well as case studies from other jurisdictions presented in this report, the following recommendations are made, which represent a holistic approach to addressing the issues raised in the Police report:

- Undertake a comprehensive review of all SFLs and ETPs currently granted to premises within the Northbridge Entertainment Precinct.
- Specifically target “high risk” venues making the largest contribution to the problem. This could be achieved by using the Police data relating to “place of last drink” prior to incidents, in the same way similar data is being used in NSW to categorise venues according to risk and implementing targeted strategies.
- Conduct further research and evaluation into the efficacy of late night lockouts based on trials / case studies in other national and international contexts.



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- Provide stronger enforcement and regulation of the Act, particularly in regards to the responsible service of alcohol.
- Provide all stakeholders with a voice in the decision making process.
- Improve public transport options and the availability of taxis in and out of Northbridge on weekends specifically.
- Facilitate the establishment of alternative nightlife options in other precincts such as the CBD and other inner city areas of Perth.



1.0 Introduction

In 2009, Coakes Consulting were commissioned by the Western Australian Nightclub Association (WANA) to undertake a Social Assessment for the Northbridge Precinct in response to the WA Police's report titled 'Is Your House in Order? Re-visiting Liquor Licensing Practises and the Establishment of an Entertainment Precinct in Northbridge', hereafter referred to as the Police report.

The Police report has advocated a reduction in nightclub operating hours to alleviate alcohol related problems in Northbridge. In August, 2009, WANA signalled its intention to submit a formal response to the report.

On Saturday 24 October 2009, the State Government released a media statement titled 'Liberal-National Government to reclaim Northbridge' (Government of Western Australia, 2009), revealing a proposal to 'reclaim Northbridge for the enjoyment of all Western Australians through strengthened policing, reduced trading hours or nightclubs and improved amenity and safety for patrons' beginning on November 1, 2009.

The statement highlighted a 'package' of initiatives involving strengthened policing, better regulation of licensed premises, increased security and amenity for the precinct and working with the community to ensure Northbridge is a safe and accessible place to visit.

A key initiative of the package is the reduction of nightclub trading hours from 6am to 5am, and the introduction of a lockout policy where patrons will not be able to enter a venue after 3.30am. Two pubs with Special Facility Licences will operate lockouts at 2am with closing times of 3am, while all other venues will keep their closing times of either 12am or 2am. The measures will initially be introduced on a voluntary basis.

While the Liberal-National Government policy proposes the introduction of late night lockouts and reduced nightclub trading hours, it does not directly adopt the recommendations outlined in the Police report. Both the WA Police and State Government recommendations do not address the key issues and evidence provided in the Police report: that is, according to the data presented in the report, the majority of incidents that occur in the precinct transpire between the hours of 12am and 2am.



To assist WANA in preparing a formal response to the WA Police, this report provides a critical analysis of the findings presented in the Police report and examines case studies from around Australia to assess the likely efficacy of the measures proposed. A list of recommendations is also provided to assist Government in addressing the issues presented.

The report is structured as follows:

Section 1 – provides a brief background as to the purpose of the report, detailing the Police report and State Government policy proposals.

Section 2 – provides an overview of the methodology employed as part of the collection, collation and analysis of data.

Section 3 – provides a detailed social profile of Northbridge, outlining the socio-demographic characteristics of the community.

Section 4 – provides a critical analysis of the Police report and independent analysis of the report findings.

Section 5 – conducts independent research into alcohol related incidents and place of last drink, location of alcohol-related assaults, and alcohol related assaults by license type and specific venue.

Section 6 – examines a number of relevant case studies from around Australia as a means of identifying learning's from other contexts to address similar issues to the WA context.

Section 7 – analyses the impacts of the proposed changes to nightclub trading hours

Section 8 – provides a number of proposed holistic measures to address the issues in Northbridge.

Section 9 – concludes the report.



2.0 Methodology

In order to prepare a formal response to the recommendations from the Police report, a critical social analysis of the report was undertaken, examining the data / statistics provided in the report. This work has involved further review of research and statistics relevant to the issue in the Northbridge context.

A social profile has been developed to place the issue in a social context. This includes a review of relevant social indicator data that provides a description of the socio-economic characteristics of the population that reside and undertake business and community activities within the locality.

A number of case studies from around Australia have also been examined, through a literature review, to highlight learning's from other impact contexts, specifically those relating to the implementation and effectiveness of specific strategies e.g. late night lockouts, reduced trading hours.

The work undertaken has then been used to predict the likely effectiveness of the proposed strategies in reducing alcohol related violence during the identified peak period of 12am to 2am, as identified in the Police Report. Some recommendations have been prepared in response to the measures proposed.



3.0 Social Profile

This section provides a profile of the Northbridge locality, located in the metropolitan area of Perth in Western Australia. Northbridge is located in the City of Perth in Western Australia.

3.1 Geographical Location, History and Characteristics

3.1.1 Early History and Area Development

Northbridge, located in the City of Perth, was officially given its name in 1979, the year of the State's 150th anniversary celebrations. Prior to this, the area was part of the Perth Central Business District (CBD), and was known by informal names such as "North of the Bridge" and "North of the Line". The name 'Northbridge' resulted from a public competition organised by the local business community, and is said to be based on the landmark Horseshoe Bridge linking the area with the CBD (Palassis Architects, 2000).

Much of Northbridge was originally part of a larger area of lakes and swamps extending from Leederville to East Perth. By the 1840s the land was eventually drained and the lakes filled enabling subdivision of the land and spread of the settlement northwards with cottages and various business established.

In 1881, the railway line was constructed cutting the area from the main Perth town site, resulting in it being referred to the area 'north of the line'. During this time, commercial and manufacturing enterprises were developed in the area.

The gold boom of the 1890s led to a dramatic rise in the State's population and high demand for accommodation close to the city. As a result, the Northbridge area was redeveloped with homes established. A number of eminent West Australians invested and moved to the area.

During the early decades of the twentieth century the richness and diversity of shops and businesses in the area increased with Northbridge enjoying a mix of social and economic classes living and working in the area.

The Northbridge Entertainment Precinct and the Northbridge Cultural Precinct, the area between Newcastle, Roe, William and Beaufort Streets specifically, covers an area of 0.67 square kilometres. In this area there are currently 37 licensed premises,



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however with restaurants included, this number totals 79 premises. The premises in Northbridge hold licence types including nightclub, tavern, special facility licence, small bar, wholesaler, hotel restricted, club restricted and liquor store.

3.1.2 Diversity of Population

The Northbridge population has changed over the decades with many immigrants arriving from interstate and overseas; the main groups included Chinese, Greeks and Italians. The legacy of these groups is evident in the area today with many Chinese and Italian restaurants still operating and the Greek Orthodox Church located in Francis Street. The large influx of Italians following the Second World War led to Northbridge being labelled 'Little Italy'. Other cultural groups to settle in Northbridge over the years included Lebanese, Macedonians, Indians, Thai, Malaysians and Vietnamese.

Traditionally, the Nyoonga Aboriginal peoples set up campsites in the Northbridge and East Perth areas, however, they were displaced following white settlement or died from infectious diseases introduced by the settlers. Today, the Aboriginal presence can still be observed with many peoples using Russell Square and Weld Square as meeting places.

3.1.3 Northbridge Today

Major changes occurred in Northbridge at the end of the twentieth century in accordance with the Stephenson-Hepburn Plan for the Perth Metropolitan Region, with the area between Newcastle, Roe, William and Beaufort Streets developed into the State's premier cultural precinct.

A new Performing Arts Centre is currently under construction in the Northbridge Cultural Precinct on the corner of Roe and Williams Streets. The Government is planning to revitalise the cultural centre to make it a more family friendly. Elements of this plan include free wireless internet, improved security, more cafes and new performance spaces, which constitute part of the \$11 million State Government commitment in the locality. In the Entertainment Precinct, the Northbridge Piazza, is currently being developed by the State Government on the corner of Lake and James Streets. The site is to be a major commercial, cultural, and creative hub and destination for locals and visitors to participate in large scale cultural events. The Piazza will open on 29 October 2009 in time for the Northbridge Festival which runs for a period of 8 days from November 1.



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A number of collectives have been established to promote the business and cultural benefits on offer in Northbridge. These include the Williams Street Collective, (a collection of small, independent stores) along with the Big N (Business Improvement Group in Northbridge), whose role is to promote Northbridge as a safe and vibrant destination for locals and visitors.

The Northbridge area is accessible by foot from Perth Train Station and Wellington Street Bus Station. It is served by a free CAT bus and also has a significant number of public car parks, both open and high rise.

The cultural mix of attractions in Northbridge, ranging from food, drink and music establishments, to boutique clothing, art galleries and markets, assists in drawing over 50,000 visitors each week, with the majority of these people visiting between Friday and Sunday. In 2006, Northbridge had a population of 674 (ABS), suggesting the majority of nightlife patrons visit the area from other parts of the Perth Metropolitan area.

The City of Perth and the State Government commissioned a report titled, 'Public Places, Public Life' (Gehl, 2009), looking at the quality of public spaces and how people use the city. The recommendations from this report included celebrating Perth's unique setting, bringing more people into the city, providing a more urban character and creating a vibrant 24-hour city.

In Perth, like all large cities, the cultural and entertainment precinct in Northbridge, with open meeting space and cultural attractions, plays a large part in drawing people to the city, and provides entertainment opportunities for locals and visitors. The Northbridge Entertainment Precinct plays a vital role in creating the urban, vibrant 24-hour city envisioned in the Gehl report.

3.2 Socio-Economic Characteristics of Northbridge

Northbridge is located in the City of Perth, which is experiencing substantial growth in terms of inner-city living, development and industry and services 100,000 daily visitors and workers in addition to its 13,000 inner-city residents. The Council is a major provider of free entertainment for the 1.5 million people in the metropolitan area and is the premier destination for business, entertainment, nightlife, culture and the arts.

The City of Perth has 8 councillors and no wards. Each councillor serves a four-year term, and half-elections are held every two years. The mayor is directly elected. The City of Perth has five suburbs which include Perth, East Perth, Northbridge, West Perth and Perth.

3.2.1 Population

According to ABS Census data, the population in Northbridge has increased marginally from 2001 to 2006; with the greater proportion of the population being male (62%). The overall population in 2006 totalled 674 (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Gender Characteristics of the Population

Sex	2006	2001
Male	415 (62%)	364 (57%)
Female	259 (38%)	273 (43%)
Total	674	637

Source: ABS Census (2006 & 2001)

Residents of Northbridge also come from mixed cultural backgrounds with 38% Australian and 30% born overseas, as highlighted in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Country of Birth of Northbridge Population

Birthplace	2006	2001
Australia	253 (38%)	212 (33%)
Overseas	201 (30%)	281 (43%)
Elsewhere (a)	39 (6%)	16 (3%)
Not stated	180 (26%)	138 (21%)
Total	673	647

Source: ABS Census (2006 & 2001)

(a) includes countries not identified individually, 'Australian External Territories', 'inadequately described', 'at sea', and 'not elsewhere classified'.

3.2.2 Age Characteristics

Table 3.3 reveals that Northbridge has a high proportion of the population falling within the 25-44 year age bracket, which has increased from 2001. The older population, 45 years and above, has remained relatively the same over the 5 year period. Interestingly, data available in 2001, also indicated that a high proportion of the population were overseas visitors. Given that the area is home to a number of hostels, the area attracts a high proportion of backpackers from overseas.

Table 3.3: Age Breakdown of Northbridge Population

Age Group	2006	2001
0-4	17 (2.5%)	19 (3%)
5-14	11 (1.6%)	9 (1.4%)
15-24	188 (27.9%)	136 (21.6%)
25-44	315 (46.7%)	215 (34.1%)
45-64	119 (17.7%)	77 (12.2%)
65 and over	24 (3.6%)	21 (3.3%)
Overseas visitors	N/A	153 (24.3%)
Total	674	630

Source: ABS Census (2006 & 2001)

3.2.3 Family Structure, Households and Housing

Table 3.4 indicates the majority of Northbridge residents are not married; however the number of married persons increased from 23% (107) to 35% (141) over the 5 year period.

Table 3.4: Marital Status of Northbridge Population

Age Group	2006	2001
Married	141 (35%)	107 (23%)
Not married	267 (65%)	353 (77%)
Total	408	460

Source: ABS Census (2006 & 2001)

The family composition data, also suggests that the majority of the population in the area are couple families with no children (Table 3.5). Interestingly, the percentage of couple families with children has declined from 24% in 2001 to only 10% in 2006. This suggests that couple families with children have moved away from Northbridge with only 16% of families including children in 2006; down from 35% in 2001.

Table 3.5: Family Composition in Northbridge

Family Structure	2006	2001
Couple family with no children	70 (78%)	64 (57%)
Couple family with children	9 (10%)	27 (24%)
One parent family with children	5 (6%)	12 (11%)
One parent family with no children	0 (0%)	10 (8%)
Other	6 (6%)	N/A (0%)
Total	90	113

Source: ABS Census (2006 & 2001)



The ABS data suggests that Northbridge household sizes are predominantly small with 88% of households containing two or less people in 2006 (Table 3.6). However in 2006, household sizes of four or more people increased to 19, where previously in 2001 there were none. This may suggest that Northbridge is becoming a more popular residential destination for families wishing to live closer to the city or may indicate single people sharing accommodation in the locality.

Table 3.6: Northbridge Household Composition

Household Size	2006	2001
1	141 (52%)	88 (53%)
2	96 (36%)	68 (41%)
3	14 (5%)	10 (6%)
4	10 (4%)	0 (0%)
5	3 (1%)	0 (0%)
6 or more	6 (2%)	0 (0%)
Total	270	166

Source: ABS Census (2006 & 2001)

As Table 3.7 illustrates, 63% of Northbridge residents reside in flats, units or apartments, followed by 17% that live in semi-detached, row or terrace house or town houses; this trend is similar to the 2001 data. The number of flats, units or apartments has increased to 163, up from 140, supporting the high proportion of couple families living without children (Table 3.5).

Table 3.7: Dwelling Types within Northbridge

Dwelling Type	Dwellings 2006	Persons 2006	Dwellings 2001	Persons 2001
Separate House	9 (3%)	24 (5%)	10 (3%)	21(5%)
Semi-detached, row or terrace house, townhouse	33 (12%)	80 (17%)	39 (12%)	73 (18%)
Flat, unit or apartment	163 (60%)	294 (63%)	140 (44%)	234 (58%)
Other dwelling	65 (25%)	71(15%)	24 (8%)	24 (6%)
Not stated	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	34 (11%)	53 (13%)
Unoccupied private dwelling	N/A (0%)	N/A (0%)	68 (22%)	N/A (0%)
Total	270	469	315	405

Source: ABS Census (2006 & 2001)



Table 3.8 indicates the majority of those residing in Northbridge are renting their accommodation, perhaps suggesting a younger population, not prepared, or financially equipped for home ownership.

Table 3.8: Housing Tenure Type within Northbridge

	Separate House	Semi-detached, row or terrace house, townhouse etc	Flat, unit or apartment	Other dwelling	Total
Fully owned	6	4	18	0	28
Being purchased	0	14	45	0	59
Rented	0	12	99	0	111
Other tenure type	0	3	0	0	3
Tenure type not stated	0	4	0	65	69
Total	6	37	162	65	270

Source: ABS Census (2006 & 2001)

3.2.4 Education

The ABS data in Table 3.9 indicates the population of Northbridge is relatively well-educated with 80% stating their highest level of school education as Year 12 or equivalent. This is a slight increase from 2001 levels where 70% of those responding had completed Year 12 or equivalent. This may reflect the young, professional population residing in Northbridge, who are able to afford higher inner-city rents.

Table 3.9: Highest Level of School Education of Northbridge Population

Level of education	2006	2001
Year 12 or equivalent	311 (80%)	226 (70%)
Year 11 or equivalent	25 (6%)	37 (12%)
Year 10 or equivalent	45 (11%)	37 (12%)
Year 9 or equivalent	4 (1%)	6 (2%)
Year 8 or below	9 (2%)	9 (3%)
Did not go to school	0 (0%)	3 (1%)
Total	394	318

Source: ABS Census (2006 & 2001)



Of those that indicated their non-school qualifications, the majority held bachelors degrees or higher. Table 3.10 may not accurately reflect the current levels of non-school qualifications held by Northbridge residents, as a large number of those surveyed in the 2006 ABS census, did not state their qualifications.

Table 3.10: Non-School Qualifications of Northbridge Population

Qualification	2006	2001
Postgraduate degree	10 (6%)	24 (9%)
Graduate Diploma/Certificate	7 (4%)	12 (5%)
Bachelor degree	84 (53%)	126 (48%)
Advanced diploma/diploma	22 (14%)	41 (16%)
Certificate	37 (23%)	60 (22%)
Total	160	263

Source: ABS Census (2006 & 2001)

3.2.5 Employment

Table 3.11 indicates the unemployment rate in Northbridge increased marginally from 4% in 2001 to 5% in 2006; this figure is marginally higher than the State average of 3.8%. In the same period the total labour force increased by 105 persons.

Table 3.11: Employment Status of Northbridge Population

Employment status	2006	2001
Full-time employed	241 (69%)	165 (68%)
Part-time employed	74 (22%)	62 (26%)
Other	15 (4%)	N/A (0%)
Unemployed	17 (5%)	15 (4%)
Total labour force	347	242

Source: ABS Census (2006 & 2001)

The persons of Northbridge were employed in industries ranging from professional, scientific and technical services (49), accommodation and food services (40), construction (30), retail trade (28), mining (24), and health care and social assistance (22). (ABS, 2006).



3.2.6 Individual Income

There was an even spread of weekly incomes earned by Northbridge residents in the 2006 census, ranging from low level incomes of between \$1 and \$149 up to \$2,000 or more per week (Table 3.12). This might suggest a population mix of young professionals living alongside a large student population.

Table 3.12: Individual Weekly Income Levels of Northbridge Population

Income level (2006 data)	Total
Nil income	30 (7%)
\$1-\$149	28 (6%)
\$150-\$249	65 (14%)
\$250-\$399	41 (9%)
\$400-\$599	56 (12%)
\$600-\$799	52 (11%)
\$800-999	39 (8%)
\$1,000-\$1,299	54 (12%)
\$1,300-\$1,599	37 (8%)
\$1,600-\$1,999	23 (5%)
\$2,000 or more	39 (8%)
Total	464

Source: ABS Census (2006)

3.2.7 Profile Summary

Table 3.13 provides a summary snapshot of the socio-demographic profile of the Northbridge community, compared with the City of Perth and wider WA State data averages.

Table 3.13: Socio-Demographic Profile of Northbridge

	Northbridge	City of Perth	WA State	Northbridge and State Comparison
Age structure				
Percent 14 and below	4.1%	4.7%	20.3%	↓
Percent 15-64 (workforce)	92.3%	85.5%	67.7%	↑
Percent 65 and above	3.6%	9.8%	12%	↓
Employment				
Unemployment rate	4.9%	5.7%	3.8%	↑
Employment rate	95.1%	94.3%	96.2%	↓
Education				
Percent with a postgraduate degree or diploma	4.6%	7.9%	3.8%	↑
Percent with a graduate certificate or diploma	2.3%	1.9%	2.5%	↓
Percent with a Bachelors degree	24.4%	28%	20.8%	↑
Percent with a certificate	11.6%	12%	33%	↓
Income				
Median individual income (\$/week)	\$638	\$626	\$500	↑
Family Composition				
Couple family with children	10%	19.1%	45.1%	↓
Couple family without children	78%	67.2%	38.4%	↑
One parent family	6%	3%	8.5%	↓
Dwellings				
Separate house	3.3%	4.3%	80.9%	↓
Semi-detached	12.2%	9.7%	10.4%	↑
Flat, unit or apartment	60.4%	80.8%	7.5%	↑
Other, including caravan	24.1%	5.2%	1.2%	↑
Housing tenure				
Fully owned	10.4%	16.7%	31.4%	↓
Being purchased	21.9%	21.6%	37.6%	↓
Rented	41.1%	54.1%	27.2%	↑

Source: ABS Census (2006)

4.0 WA Police Report - Critical Analysis

The WA Police report outlines the extent of alcohol-related problems in Northbridge and argues in favour of legislative change designed to restrict the availability of alcohol in the area. Specifically, the report makes the following recommendations:

- “Special Facility Licenses (SFLs) and Extended Trading Permits (ETPs) [should be] wound back to midnight, as this would allow patrons to move on to a nightclub or utilise public transport in order to get home,” and
- “Consideration should be given to winding back the closing time of Nightclub licenses [from 6:00am] to 3:00am, as this would allow sufficient time for the precinct to be rejuvenated ready for morning trade” (WA Police Report, p. 35).

It is noteworthy that the recommendation made in relation to nightclubs is identified only as a means to rejuvenate the precinct for morning trade rather than to address problems relating to alcohol consumption. The clear recommendation that is made in the report is that SFLs and ETPs should be wound back and further implementation of these licenses/permits reviewed.

In the report, the above recommendations are made as a result of the following line of argument:

- There has been an increase in the number of recorded offences in Northbridge over the past five years.
- The majority of police tasks relating to violent and anti-social incidents in Northbridge originate between 11:00pm and 3:00am on Friday and Saturday nights.
- The vast majority of St John Ambulance tasks in Northbridge occur between 1:00am and 4:00am on the same nights, although the nature of these tasks was not specified in the report.
- Based on anecdotal evidence (i.e. the experiences of police and hospital workers), a significant proportion of these unwanted incidents appear to be alcohol-related.
- The only licenses operating within these times are hotels & SFLs (pubs), and nightclubs.
- The operating hours of these venues should be reduced in order to restrict alcohol availability during these periods, given that alcohol is presumed to be the main cause of the observed anti-social behaviour in Northbridge.



4.1 Response to the WA Police Report

4.1.1 Alcohol and Violence – Establishing Cause and Effect

The findings of the report rest on the assumption that alcohol is the cause of anti-social/violent behaviour in Northbridge.

Alcohol is likely to be related to such behaviour, but the extent to which it directly *causes* aggressive behaviour is unknown. The term “alcohol-related” is often used loosely to describe incidents in which the offender/victim has consumed alcohol, even when the role of alcohol in the event is unclear. Given that Northbridge has a residential population of 674 people (ABS Basic Community Profile, 2006), it is reasonable to assume that many of the incidents that occur on weekends involve people who come to the area for entertainment purposes, many of whom are likely to drink during the course of their night out. As such, the fact that a large proportion of incidents in Northbridge could be classified as “alcohol-related” does not necessarily mean they are caused by alcohol consumption. Instead, it should be recognised that because on weekends there are a high proportion of people in Northbridge who have consumed alcohol, it is a statistical inevitability that the majority of offenders/victims will also have consumed alcohol.

Furthermore, the fact that some people become more aggressive when under the influence of alcohol does not necessarily mean that alcohol consumption will lead to violent behaviour in all individuals. For instance, research by Giancola (2002) demonstrates that there are individual risk factors that influence the role of alcohol on aggressive behaviour. In his research, Giancola found that alcohol increased aggressive behaviour for individuals with high dispositional aggressivity, but not for those with low dispositional aggressivity. Similarly, Hughes et al. (2007) found that individuals who drank at home before going out were more likely to get into fights than people who did not drink before going out, even when total alcohol consumption was taken into account.

These findings suggest that patterns of drinking behaviour are more predictive of alcohol-related problems than is total amount of consumption. As such, solutions need to also target individual and contextual risk factors, rather than aim simply to limit alcohol consumption through reduced trading hours.



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The presentation of these findings is not intended to undermine the seriousness of the problem in Northbridge or the role of alcohol in nightlife violence. Nevertheless, it is important to recognise where assumptions are being made in the Police report in relation to cause and effect.

Furthermore, these findings raise awareness of the factors that put individuals at risk, and are important when considering potential solutions that target trouble-makers, such as ID scanners and stricter sentencing; which do not impede the lifestyles of the well-behaved majority.

4.1.2 Limitations of Crime Statistics

Crime statistics can be misleading when used to indicate the prevalence of a particular behaviour and should be interpreted in light of contextual factors. This is due to the fact that an offence must be detected in order for it to be recorded, meaning that changing policing strategies often explain observed variance in crime rates.

For instance, the police report states that the number of disorderly conduct offences in Northbridge increased sharply from less than 100 in 2005 (exact figure not provided) to 1,377 in 2009. This data is presented to support the report's general assertion that the prevalence of anti-social behaviour in Northbridge has increased significantly since 2005. However, these figures may be more likely to reflect a greater police presence in Northbridge and a deliberate "crack down" on disorderly conduct, rather than a ten-fold increase in unwanted behaviours.

Similar erroneous interpretations of crime statistics occur throughout the report, with the most illustrative example occurring on page 25 (WA Police, 2009):

"In August 2008 'Operation Nightsafe' deployment was boosted by 60% to 200 police officers for four weekends as an experimental strategy, with data being compared to August 2007... An analysis of the trial found that police attended 37 more incidents, prosecuted 91 percent more offenders, issued 57 percent more move on notices and furthermore, 38 percent more assault offences were reported. This is a clear indication that police presence does not deter alcohol-fuelled anti-social behaviour."



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Contrary to the authors' interpretation, it is likely that an increase in the number of prosecutions, notices issued, and incidents attended are likely to be directly related to an increase in police numbers. Such data says nothing about whether the prevalence of unwanted behaviours in Northbridge has increased, decreased, or remained the same, but may illustrate the impact the greater police presence has had on the number of offences detected and punished. However, instead of presenting the police intervention in a positive light, the authors have suggested it has failed to deter anti-social behaviour in Northbridge, when in reality it remains possible that stricter law enforcement will lead to long-term behaviour change.

There are other instances throughout the report where data has been misrepresented or used selectively. For example, the authors chose not to include "*time of last drink*" data for alcohol-related incidents, despite stating that such information was readily available to them. This omission is unusual given that the report's intention is to establish a link between licensed premises trading hours and the frequency of alcohol-related incidents, many of which occur in public places. Likewise, although "*place of last drink*" data was presented, the report did not differentiate between licenses, meaning that it was not possible to determine whether problems were more likely to occur depending on the type of venue attended. This time/place of last drink data would provide a valuable insight into the issue and allow for a more targeted strategy designed to reduce alcohol-related problems.

4.1.3 Differences Between Nightclubs and Hotels

The Police report largely ignores the fact that there are key differences between nightclubs and hotels. In addition to presenting combined crime data for all license types (as described above), much of the academic research cited by the authors are studies that examine hotels and nightclubs as a single category, or hotels only. A more thorough understanding of the issue requires that the two license categories are acknowledged as different, not only in their operations and business models (to be discussed here), but also in relation to the prevalence of violence on their premises (to be discussed later in this report).

The term "pubs and clubs" is frequently used by the media, but it erroneously implies these distinctly different license categories are one and the same. However, there are important differences between "pubs" (hotels, taverns, and some special facilities) and "clubs" (nightclubs), which may explain why there is a greater incidence of assaults in hotels over nightclubs (see Section 5.3 for a review).



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While some “pubs” provide entertainment, people primarily visit them to drink, and their profits are almost entirely dependent on the sale of alcohol. Pubs typically have few barriers to entry (i.e. door charges and dress codes), and entertainment, if provided, is usually broad in its appeal. Further, hotels are more likely to attract patrons who wish to spend their money on alcohol rather than door fees, which correlates to a significantly higher bar sales ‘spend per patron’ in hotels than Nightclubs.

Nightclubs, on the other hand, are primarily entertainment environments. Under the Liquor Control Act (1988), nightclubs are required by law, unlike hotels, to provide continuous entertainment to their patrons. As such, they exist to provide entertainment and any alcohol sold is ancillary to that entertainment. Most nightclubs in Northbridge have an entertainment “niche,” typically a style of music that appeals to their patrons and for which their patrons are willing to pay an entry fee. In some cases, nightclubs sell presale tickets for nights in which high profile DJs from overseas are invited to play music. Door charges and presale tickets not only cover the cost of providing high quality entertainment, but also serve to generate a separate revenue stream, meaning nightclubs’ profits are not solely dependent on the sale of alcohol. Furthermore, door fees also act as a “filter” by selecting out individuals who are not willing to pay for the entertainment provided.

In light of the differences between hotels and nightclubs, it is likely there are significant differences between their patrons’ characteristics, including their individual drinking patterns and propensity towards violence. Furthermore, there are also likely to be some environmental differences between nightclubs and hotels, and certain characteristics of licensed premises are associated with alcohol-related harm, such as discounted drinks, high boredom, aggressive bouncers, and low comfort (Hemel, Tomsen, & Thommeny, 1992).

As such, it can be expected that differences also exist between license types in terms of alcohol-related problems. Indeed, statistical evidence presented later in this report demonstrates exactly that, with hotels being most strongly linked to alcohol-related violence out of all categories of liquor licenses.



5.0 Findings of Independent Research

5.1 Recent Trends in Violent Crime

Limited crime data is available on the WA Police website, including the number of assault offences per month by locality (this was the only offence category available considered relevant to the discussion of alcohol-related problems in Northbridge).

As shown in Figure 5.1 and Figure 5.2, the number of assaults occurring in Northbridge has remained steady over the past five years, and has decreased significantly in the past two years. These findings are inconsistent with the data presented in the police report, although it is noted that the authors have categorised assaults under “selected offences against the person,” which also included robbery and threatening behaviour. Furthermore, as shown in Table 5.1 (see also Figure 5.3); assaults in other popular nightspots have increased in the last year, **while assaults in Northbridge have actually decreased by 13%**. These findings are consistent with a news report in March 2009, stating that “the police claim that in the past 12 months they have reduced some crime categories, including assaults, by 11% in Northbridge” (Francis, 2009). Overall, these statistics demonstrate that the problem of violent crime is not unique to Northbridge, and more importantly that the situation has improved considerably over recent years relative to other areas.

Table 5.1: Number of assaults in Northbridge, Perth, Subiaco, and Leederville over the past two years.

	Northbridge	Perth	Subiaco	Leederville	Fremantle
Aug 2007 – July 2008	684	735	97	113	414
Aug 2008 – July 2009	593 (-13.30%)	720 (-2.04%)	129 (32.99%)	79 (-30.09%)	385 (7.00%)

Source: WA Police

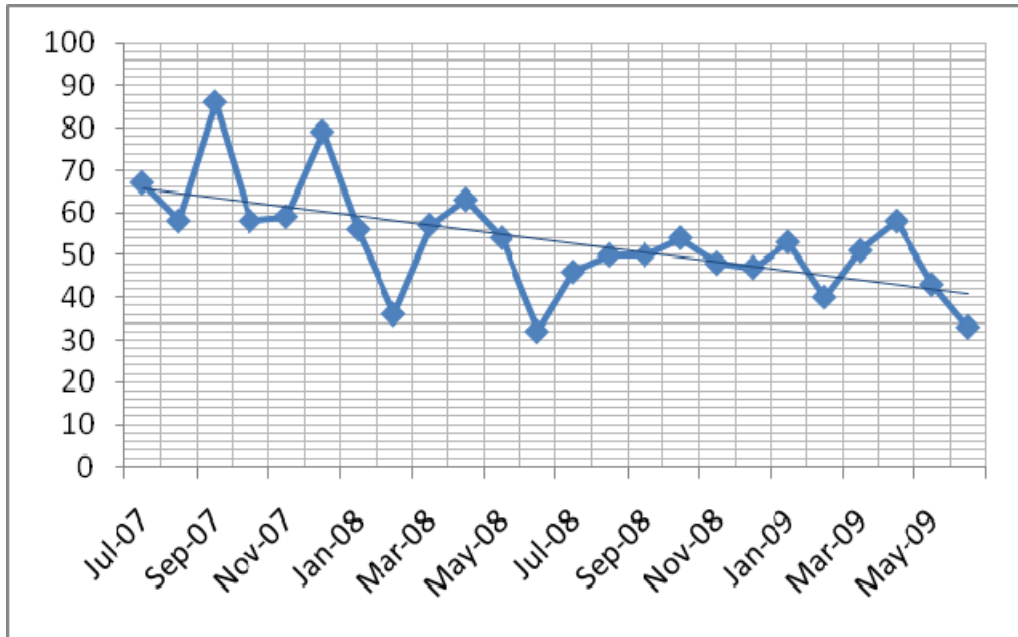


Figure 5.1: Assaults per month in Northbridge over the past two years (July 2007 – June 2009).
 Source: WA Police

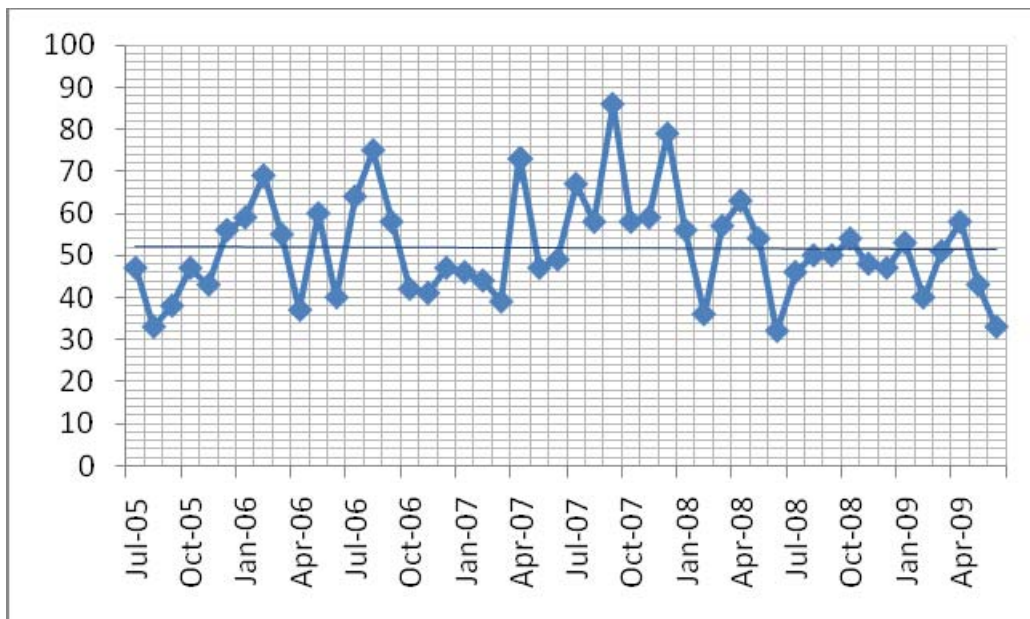


Figure 5.2: Assaults per month in Northbridge over the past five years (July 2005 – June 2009).
 Source: WA Police

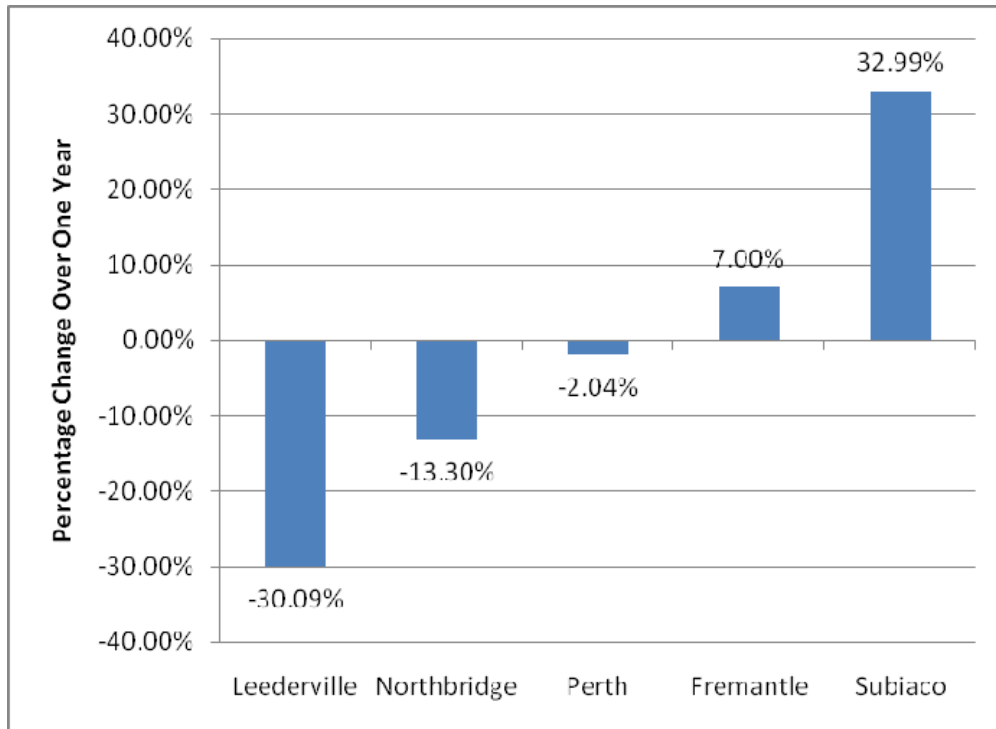


Figure 5.3: Percentage change in number of assaults, by locality, between the August 2007 – July 2008 period and the same period in the following year.

Source: WA Police

5.2 When Do Alcohol-Related Incidents Occur?

Central to the discussion of reduced licensee trading hours is the issue of when alcohol-related incidents actually occur. The Police report provides evidence that the vast majority of alcohol-related incidents occur between 12am and 2am (Figure 5.4). This finding has been widely reported in research journals and studies from other states (cf. Briscoe & Donnelly, 2001).

Furthermore, the Police report provides figures suggesting ambulance tasks generally peak between the hours of 1am and 4am. If these tasks are alcohol-related, it stands to reason that the alcohol consumed must have been consumed prior to the incident necessitating the task. Given that alcohol takes time to be absorbed in order to take effect, it should be recognised that the consumption of alcohol would not necessarily occur immediately prior to the incident. It is also likely there would be some time lag between incidents occurring and the calling of ambulances. Therefore, in light of these points, the fact that ambulance tasks appear to peak later in the evening, between 1am and 4am, could be seen to fully support the view that the problems related to drinking peak earlier, between 12am and 2am.



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However, it is also important to note not all ambulance tasks would be alcohol-related. Indeed, data presented in the Police report indicates that ambulance tasks occur throughout the week, with approximately 15 occurring on Tuesdays (in a 12 month period) and 20 on Thursdays, compared to 50 on Saturdays (which would also include early morning incidents related to Friday nights). Indeed, according to the Police report, "approximately one third of presentations to the hospital emergency department are alcohol-related" (Fatovich, cited by WA Police, 2009, p. 23). This estimate should be taken into account when interpreting ambulance task data. **Furthermore, it must be recognised that it is a statistical inevitability that the number of ambulance tasks originating in Northbridge would increase during the times in which it experiences the greatest influx of visitors. Attributing this rise entirely to the serving of alcohol during the same period would be an invalid assumption.**

Although the Police report provides times of incidents, it does not report the time of last drink before incidents. Again, it is likely there is a time lag between the last drink and the actual incident, meaning the consumption of alcohol related to incidents during the peak period between midnight and 2am is likely to occur slightly earlier.

In summary, the Police report provides clear evidence that the problems in Northbridge occur between midnight than 2am, a finding that is widely supported by data from other areas (cf. Briscoe & Donnelly, 2001). As such, it is clear that any solution must target this most problematic time period if it is to be most effective. Further discussion of how effective it would be to reduce hours is presented in section 7, where it is argued that a full reduction of hours after 3am will have less of an impact than a partial reduction of hours before 3am.

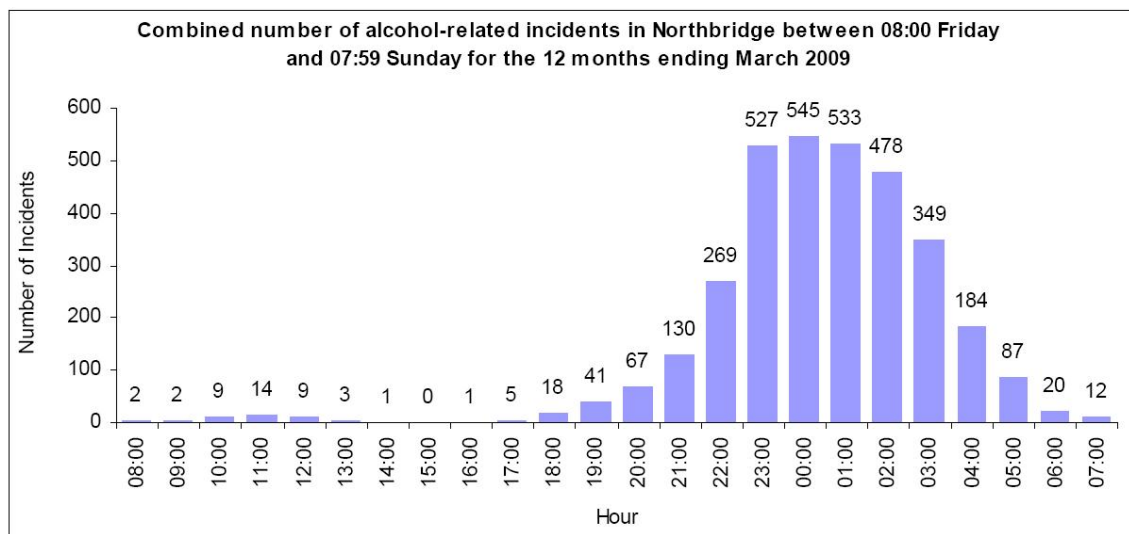


Figure 5.4: Combined number of alcohol-related incidents in Northbridge, by time period.
Source: WA Police

5.3 Where Do Alcohol-Related Incidents Occur?

The following section examines data in relation to the *location* of alcohol-related incidents, in order to assess the roles that different drinking environments have in the manifestation of unwanted anti-social behaviour in Northbridge. The discussion starts at a broad level, before moving on to an analysis of different license categories and concludes with a review of data that indicates that it is often the case that **only a handful of venues account for the vast majority of incidents.**

5.3.1 Alcohol-Related Incidents and Place of Last Drink

The Police Report presents evidence that suggests the majority of alcohol-related incidents in Northbridge occur in situations where the last drink was consumed in a licensed venue (Figure 5.5). Given that “alcohol-related incidents” included such behaviours as “refusal to leave licensed premise,” and the very high number of licensed premises in Northbridge relative to private dwellings (270 in 2006, according to ABS), this finding is not surprising.

Interestingly, 23% of Northbridge incidents occur after the last drink was consumed in a *public* place, despite the fact that street drinking is illegal in Australia. **As such, nearly a quarter of the problems the Government seeks to address are originating from an illegal practice. This fact should be taken into consideration before implementing a solution that targets people who enjoy drinking legally in nightclubs.**

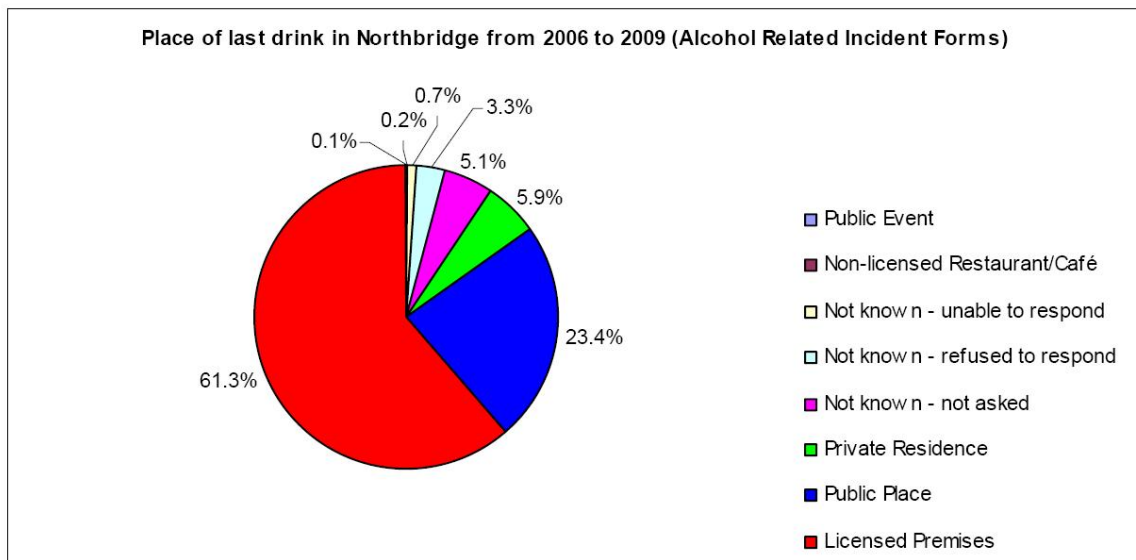


Figure 5.5: Place of last drink before occurrence of alcohol-related incidents.

Note: In this instance, alcohol-related incidents include assaults, disorderly behaviour, drug possession, breach of move on notice, damage, drink driving, loitering, and refusal to leave licensed premises.

Source: WA Police Report

5.3.2 Location of Alcohol-Related Assaults

Figure 5.6 presents a pattern of findings that differs significantly from the results presented in the Police Report and is included, as a means of comparison, in the absence of presentation of such data in the WA context.

As shown, the majority of alcohol-related assault incidents in New South Wales occur in private residences, according to data presented by Briscoe and Donnelly (2001). However, compared to Northbridge, there are far more residential premises relative to licensed premises in the state of NSW. As such, the differences between the datasets are not surprising. Nevertheless, if we assume the problems in NSW are similar to those in WA, the fact that approximately 75% of alcohol-related assaults occur in premises other than licensed premises puts the Northbridge issue into perspective.



As the statistics illustrate, assaults involving alcohol occur more frequently in other environments, meaning the focus on licensed premises in Northbridge may be considered disproportionate to the reality of the problem. To further put the issue into perspective, it should also be noted that Briscoe and Donnelly’s data indicates that only 8.9% of all assaults in NSW occurred in licensed premises, and as many as one third of these were not classified as alcohol-related, suggesting other factors were involved.

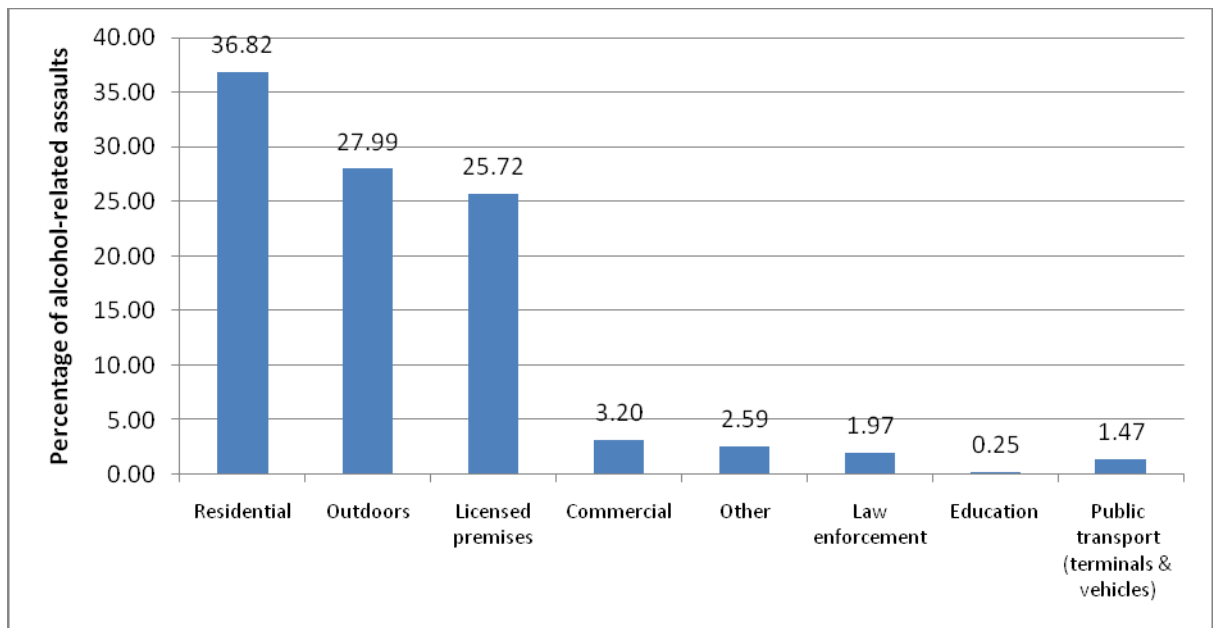


Figure 5.6: Alcohol-related assault incidents in NSW by premises type, July 1999 – June 2000.
Source: Briscoe and Donnelly, 2001

5.3.3 Alcohol-Related Assaults by License Type

Unfortunately, the “place of last drink” data provided by the police (Figure 5.5) does not separate “licensed premises” into the different license categories. As such, it is not possible to examine differences in number of incidents between restaurants, hotels, and nightclubs in Northbridge, despite there being marked differences in their definitions under the Liquor Control Act (1988).

In October 2009, a social consultant from Coakes Consulting contacted the Office of Crime Prevention to request access to the disaggregated “place of last drink” data from alcohol-related incident forms (ARIFs) published in the Police Report. The request was forwarded to an author of the original report, who informed CC that they would not be granted access to the data:



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"In relation to your ARIF data request, I have to inform you that ARIF data is collected for operational decision-making purposes only and not for corporate reporting. As such the information provided in the report is the lowest level of data available for external reporting and so no further disaggregation of data is available for release." (V. Hughes, personal communication, October 20, 2009)

In light of this, crime statistics from NSW were obtained in order to investigate the differences between license categories in terms of their association with alcohol-related incidents. In their research paper, Briscoe and Donnelly (2003) published the number of licenses in each category in inner Sydney as well as the actual number of assaults occurring in those venues over a two year period.

While their figures suggested the number of incidents in hotels was high, it was also apparent from their data that some license categories were over-represented in the total number of licenses (e.g. restaurants, which make up 49.2% of licenses in inner Sydney but account for only 5.8% of assaults on licensed premises).

For the purposes of this report, Briscoe and Donnelly's (2003) data was further analysed in order to enable comparisons between the numbers of assaults occurring in each category of license in the context of the numbers of premises operating within each category. The results of this analysis are presented in Figure 5.7 below.

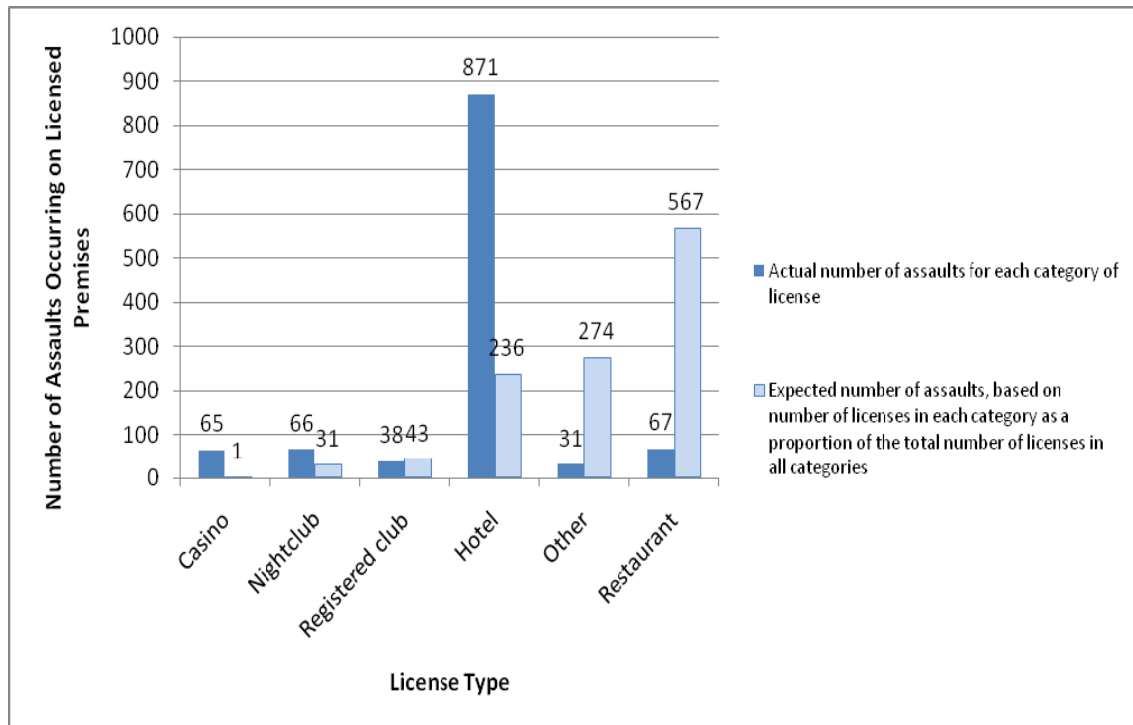


Figure 5.7: Actual vs. expected assault incidents on licensed premises in inner Sydney, July 1998 – June 2000.

Note: "Other" includes all off-licenses, on-licenses for motels, public halls, universities, colleges, vessels and functions, theatres and governor's licenses.

Source: Briscoe and Donnelly (2003)

As shown in Figure 5.7, hotels had by far the highest number of assaults occurring on-premises (871), despite representing only 20.5% of all licensed premises, a proportion for which only 236 assaults would have been expected. Restaurants, on the other hand, which make up 49.2% of all licensed premises in inner Sydney, should have accounted for 567 assaults if all license categories are assumed to contribute equally to the problem of alcohol-related violence, but in reality only accounted for 67.

Interestingly, the only venue operating under a casino license had by far the highest actual number of assaults, relative to their expected number of assaults. This finding should be taken into consideration before implementing changes in WA, given that a reduction in nightclub trading hours may encourage people to move on to Burswood Casino after 3am, which may or may not have similar assault numbers to the casino in inner Sydney.



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According to the data presented above, the contribution made by nightclubs to the problem of violence in NSW exceeds the level expected of them if all license types were equally problematic. Therefore, nightclubs certainly do need to take *some* responsibility and actively participate in the solution, and indeed WANA has expressed its intention to do so cooperatively from the outset. WANA has already stated its willingness to reduce its hours, **but only if the same restrictions are placed on other categories such as hotels, when it is clear that they play a significant part in the overall problem.**

However, it should also be recognised that, given there are a very small number of nightclubs relative to other licenses, the contribution of nightclubs to the overall problem in inner Sydney is also very small (accounting for only 5.7% of assaults). Since there are only 10 operating nightclubs in Northbridge, as opposed to 16 hotels and SFLs, and the average capacity of each of the hotels and SFLs is far greater than the average capacity of nightclubs, it must be acknowledged that the contribution of nightclubs to the overall problem in Northbridge is likely to be small, when considered in light of the contribution made by other license categories such as hotels. **Therefore, a solution to the problem would certainly make sense if it targeted only hotels, or hotels and nightclubs, but it does not follow logically to target only nightclubs if decision makers are serious about reducing alcohol-related violence in Northbridge.**

Interestingly, despite their findings, Briscoe and Donnelly (2003) group hotels and nightclubs together when formulating their conclusions; this is most likely due to nightclubs not being a separate category of license in NSW as they are in WA. This may in part be due to the fact that the two license categories are often referred to collectively as “pubs and clubs” in the media, despite the clear differences in the nature of their operations and clientele (see section 4.1.3 for a discussion). The findings presented in Figure 5.7 emphasise the need to view nightclubs and hotels as having separate impacts on the overall problem.

5.3.4 Alcohol-Related Assaults by Specific Venue

Again, despite collecting data for alcohol-related incidents by specific venue, the WA Police did not publish such information in their report. Nevertheless, the data in Briscoe and Donnelly’s (2003) NSW study (presented above) was presented and discussed in their paper at an appropriate level to enable an investigation into how venues within the same license categories differ in relation to their “risk” (i.e. their patrons’ propensity towards violence).

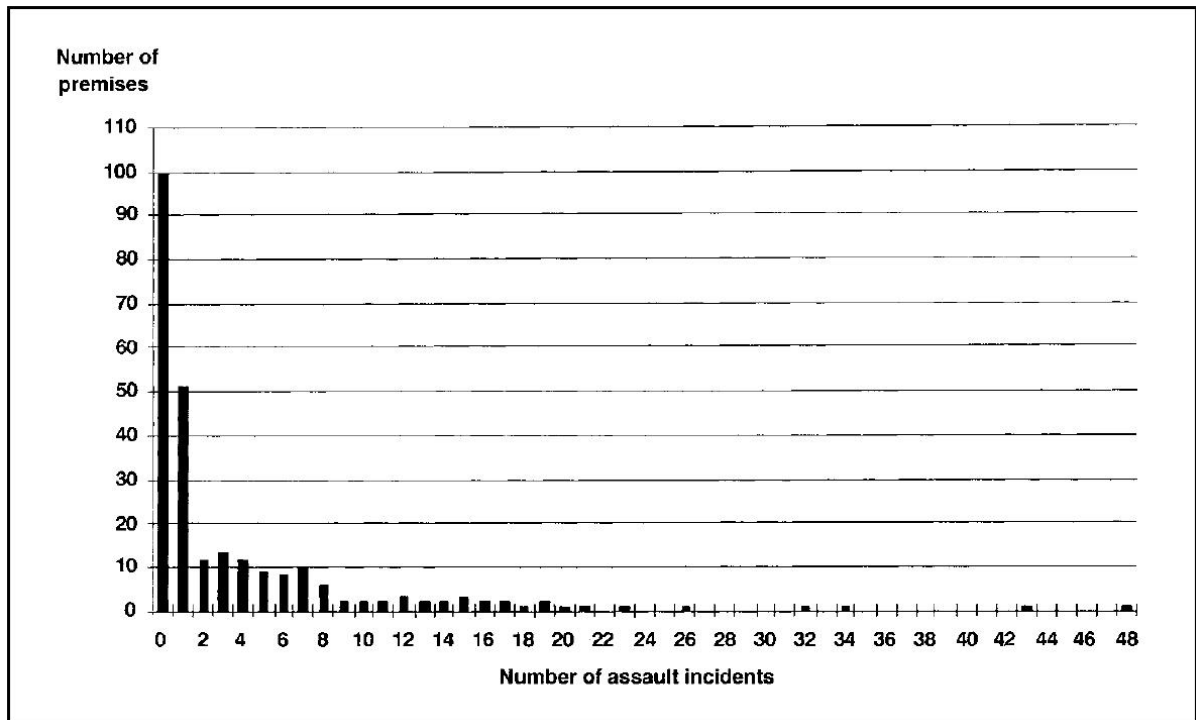


Figure 5.8: Frequency distribution of hotels and nightclubs in inner Sydney by number of assault incidents, July 1998 – June 2000.

Source: Reproduced from Briscoe and Donnelly (2003).

The results of Briscoe and Donnelly’s (2003) analysis are presented in Figure 5.8, although unfortunately they chose to group hotels and nightclubs in the same chart. As shown, a very small number of venues account for the majority of assault incidents. Approximately 100 venues had zero incidents in two years, and approximately 51 venues had only one incident during the same period. Despite grouping hotels and nightclubs together, the authors acknowledge that “just seven of these *hotels* (3%) recorded 24% of all assaults at inner Sydney *hotels and nightclubs*” (Briscoe & Donnelly, p. 26, emphasis added). This frequency distribution provides clear evidence that even within certain license categories (in this case, a combined group of hotels and nightclubs) there are differences between specific venues, such that some venues may be more susceptible to violent incidents than others.

In light of this evidence, the fairness of applying restrictions to all venues within a category must be questioned given that it is clear that the problems are related to a handful of venues that could be classified as “high risk” drinking environments. Therefore, as the researchers appropriately conclude, “since a small minority of licensed premises appear to be the most problematic for alcohol-related violence, enforcement efforts need to be targeting these high-risk venues” (Briscoe & Donnelly, 2003, p. 31).

6.0 Case Study Analysis

While late night lockouts, curfews and reduced trading hours have been introduced and trialled all around Australia, evaluations of these trials and policies are scarce, possibly due to the recency of trials being conducted.

A literature review revealed a number of initiatives trialled throughout the country, with mixed results. Several outcomes from these case studies can be assessed to help inform the decision making process relevant to the Northbridge Entertainment Precinct.

6.1 Late Night Lockouts

The Police report recommended late night lockouts be introduced to Northbridge to address some of the alcohol related incidents occurring in the precinct. The State Government has since announced that a 3.30am lock out will be introduced in Northbridge, on a voluntary basis, to coincide with reduced trading hours for nightclubs from 6am to 5am.

Late night lockouts have been trialled in a number of metropolitan and rural locations around Australia with varying results. It should be noted that evidence around the efficacy of the lockout strategy is scant, primarily because the approach is a relatively new one.

For instance, a trial late night lockout policy was introduced in Melbourne in 2008 in four nightspots, affecting 487 venues (Quiet start, 2008). The policy resulted in patrons being unable to enter pubs after 2am. Once inside an establishment, patrons were able to remain until closing time, with the main objective of the policy being to restrict 'venue hopping' by large groups of people.

A similar policy was introduced to several regional cities in Victoria, which the Victorian Police claimed had helped reduce alcohol fueled crime. The Australian Hotels Association noted at the time that lock-outs in regional Victoria had helped to reduce alcohol related violence, however, the policy may have impacted on establishments with earlier closing times (Late night lockouts, 2008).



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The Victorian Police were promoting the policy's success shortly after the trial (Pub lockouts work, 2008), despite strong opposition from a number of sources including hotel traders, community members and the State Opposition. A quarter of the venues affected by the lockout policy appealed to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal and won exemptions for the lockouts. In this vein, an attempt by the Victorian Government to bring the policy into legislation was blocked by the Opposition in Parliament, with claims the bill was 'undemocratic' and denied 'natural justice to affected late-night operators'.

Auditing company, KPMG, was commissioned by the State Government to survey both venues and patrons after the lockout trial ended, finding that the lockouts had not worked effectively; it was reported that violent crime had actually increased during the lockout trial period (MelbournePubs.com, 2008).

The Victorian Government eventually chose not to pursue the lockout policy against strong opposition. A lack of consultation with key stakeholders in developing the policy, and the policies inability in addressing the core issues, resulted in the policy being deemed a 'band-aid' measure which unfairly impacted on hotel traders.

The National Drug Research Institute (2007) review of alcohol restrictions in Australia concluded that current evidence for the efficacy of lockouts is insufficient to conclude causality; their position is that the policy requires further investigation and evaluation before being introduced in various jurisdictions.

The NDRI report concluded that lockouts:

1. Where voluntary, are unlikely to have long term viability because they are unlikely to be undermined when not supported by, or inclusive of, all licences operating in a given area;
2. May increase problems associated with patrons refused entry after lockout time;
3. Might rely on a level of ongoing police enforcement to be effective;
4. Should be regarded as a support strategy, secondary to other more effective mandatory restrictions;
5. May be a viable short term approach to reducing acute workload pressures on police during late-night hours, especially for entertainment precincts with high levels of problems.



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It is recommended that further extensive research and evaluation of existing trials, along with broad consultation with all stakeholders affected by the policy would be required, if the policy of late night lockouts is implemented in the Northbridge precinct.

6.2 Front-end Factors

There are a number of factors which occur during the evening that result in alcohol related violence. Many of these key factors occur at the 'front end' of the evening (between 8pm and 1am), and range from the wide availability of cheap alcohol that can be purchased from off-license venues ('loading up'), to the 'double dipping' by patrons at suburban 'feeder establishments' that usually close before the late night trading establishments get into full swing.

In Newcastle, NSW, a 1.30am lock-out and 3.30am curfew was introduced by Police for selected licensed premises in 2008. Police claimed that the measures had helped to reduce crime in Newcastle on weekends and called for the policy to be introduced across the wider Newcastle LGA (Newcastle on Hunter, 2009).

A local community group raised concerns that the measures were unfair to the vast majority of law abiding citizens for a problem caused by a minority. There was also concern that patronage of hotels was down and that the measures could affect associated businesses such as food and accommodation, resulting in employment losses (Jones, 2008).

Despite these concerns, some Newcastle residents undertook a class action against hotel traders in the area after measures introduced by the Liquor Board of NSW; as curfews and lockouts were deemed to not go far enough, in the eyes of the community, to reduce the 'front end' problems associated with alcohol related violence (Newcastle on Hunter, 2009).

Some of the key points of the class action include:

1. The reduction in alcohol-related violence in Newcastle has supposedly been a result of a two hour reduction in the service of alcohol to 3am. The number of alcohol-related violent incidents dropped from 251 in 07/08 to 172 in 08/09.
2. The 3hr period from 10pm to 1am is now the single most violent time of the night, a reverse on the previous year's results when no restrictions were in place.



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3. More needs to be done in Newcastle to firstly, further reduce alcohol-related violence and secondly, to seriously address the causes of intoxication at the beginning (or 'front end') of the drinking night and contribution towards intoxication by 'feeder establishments.'
4. By comparison, assaults in nearby Hamilton (unaffected by the LAB decision) increased by 7.3% to 73 reported assaults (there are approximately less than half the number of late trading venues in Hamilton compared to nearby Newcastle - Hamilton adopted voluntary measures later in the year). Reported assaults after 1am in Hamilton increased by 50%.

These findings may suggest that, while the policy had some positive impacts on reducing alcohol related violence, the problems were merely shifted to other time periods and other geographical areas. This case study indicates that when late night lockouts are not implemented holistically with a raft of initiatives addressing all of the issues, the problems will continue, albeit in a different manner.

In another report titled '*Alcohol, Nightlife and Violence: the relative contributions of drinking before and during nights out to negative health and criminal justice outcomes*' (2007), examined the differences in alcohol consumption and negative nightlife experiences between young people who drink prior to attending city nightlife venues, and those who do not drink until reaching bars and nightclubs.

The report notes that intoxication can be associated with drinking venues that are poorly managed, uncomfortable and tolerant towards drunkenness and which experience higher levels of aggression. The report adds that interventions often look to address alcohol related violence, and do not address alcohol consumption per se, which could be contended as the root cause of the problem. This focus neglects the roles played by other drinking locations and alcohol retailers in drunkenness and related problems. For example, young people often consume alcohol at home before a night out.

The report found that pre-nightlife drinking does not appear to be a substitute for consumption in nightlife; rather, those drinking before a night out drink similar amounts while out, to those who do not.



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Drinking before going out was associated with greater involvement in fighting in nightlife; however, total alcohol consumption was not associated with fighting, suggesting that pre-nightlife drinking may be a more important factor in nightlife violence than total consumption.

The report states the need to expand measures to prevent nightlife drunkenness and violence beyond pubs, bars and nightclubs (e.g. reducing irresponsible cheap promotions). Safer drinking at home should be promoted and encouraged as this may not be recognised by many as a problem. Without such an approach, well-meaning initiatives to improve city centres may simply push excessive drinking and related problems, including violence, into home environments and local communities.

This research paper highlights the impacts that can occur prior to individuals descending upon entertainment precincts such as Northbridge. With 50,000 people entering Northbridge each week, it could be argued that much of the dangerous alcohol consumption has occurred prior to their arrival.

6.3 Reduced Trading Hours

An evaluation of restricted trading hours in the Australian Capital Territory (Walker & Biles, 1997) summarises a three stage evaluation of a seven month trial of 4am closing of nightclubs in Canberra in 1996. For several years prior to trial, nightclubs had been legally able to trade twenty four hours a day. The ACT Government decided to conduct a "before-and-after" study to determine whether any reduction of crime and/or anti-social behaviour was achieved by the early closing.

To conduct the report the consultants analysed the effect of existing crime prevention measures on alcohol related anti-social behaviour and undertook surveys with nightclub licensees, random phone surveys, taxi drivers and businesses.

The results can be summarised as follows. The negative results obtained indicate that 4am closing:

1. Has not been shown, by police statistics, to reduce crime and antisocial behaviour in the neighbourhood of these licensed premises;
2. Has not resulted in any significant change in the perceptions of safety held by residents and business people in the relevant neighbourhoods;



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3. Is not seen by residents or the business communities as having reduced crime and antisocial behaviour; has exacerbated problems for taxi drivers through increased levels of passenger aggression; and
4. Is believed to have caused financial loss to the nightclubs and taverns affected by the restrictions.

The positive outcomes of the study indicate that 4 am closing:

1. May have contributed, along with other programs, such as the designated driver scheme and diversionary conferencing, to a decline in the incidence of drink driving;
2. Has resulted in cost savings for the ACT Police as a result of lower staffing requirements at weekend early morning shifts; and
3. May have contributed to police perceptions of a cleaner and more orderly City area.

The following paragraph from the report suggests that the most significant benefit of the policy was the cost saving in operations for Police:

'A submission from the ACT Police argued that, while their own statistics may not show convincing evidence of reductions in levels of crime and antisocial behaviour, the early closure of nightclubs has resulted in cost savings for police operations and a cleaner city.' (Walker, 1997).

This comment may be interpreted to suggest that cost savings are seen as a desired outcome, even when they occur in the absence of a statistically proven reduction in crime. Returning to the situation in WA, if the reason for reducing nightclub hours is primarily to deliver cost savings through less policing, then this reasoning should be made more explicit, particularly in light of statistics (discussed earlier in this report) that demonstrate nightclub hours after 3am have little to do with the overall problem of alcohol-related violence in Northbridge.

Overall, this evaluation is somewhat inconclusive as to the overall benefits of the 'reduced trading hours' policy; however it was clear that there were some unintended negative impacts on several stakeholders such as nightclubs, taverns and taxi drivers.



6.4 Targeting “High Risk” Venues

As discussed in Section 5.3.4, NSW assault incident data clearly illustrates the fact that a small number of venues account for a large number of on-premises assaults in inner Sydney. In light of this, the NSW Government plans to implement a new scheme designed to specifically target high risk venues, as well as encourage all licensees to reduce the number of assaults occurring on their premises.

Specifically, the initiative uses assault incident data to categorise venues according to their level of risk. Instead of imposing restrictions on all venues, irrespective of their risk, the scheme will introduce specific rules for venues in each category. These rules are summarised in Table 6.1 below.

Table 6.1: NSW scheme to be introduced in December, 2009.

Number of assault incidents on licensed premises	Category Descriptor	Additional Licensed Conditions
19 or more incidents	Level 1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A mandatory 2am lockout of patrons (except members of registered clubs) 2. Cessation of alcohol service 30 minutes prior to close 3. No glass containers to be used after midnight 4. No shots and drink limit restrictions after midnight. 5. Ten minute alcohol sales time out every hour after midnight or active distribution of water and/or food 6. Extra security measures.
12 to 18 incidents	Level 2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cessation of alcohol services 30 minutes prior to close. 2. No glass containers to be used after midnight. 3. Ten minute alcohol sales time out every hour after midnight or active distribution of water and/or food.
8 to 11 incidents	Level 3	No additional special license conditions.

Under the scheme, businesses will be required to remain in their specified category for a minimum of six months, but will be able to change categories if current assault data provides sufficient grounds for such a change.



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The obvious advantage of the scheme is that it directly targets problematic venues, without imposing restrictions on businesses with good records. As shown in Figure 5.8 in an earlier section of this report, only a handful of venues had high numbers of assaults, while the vast majority had one or less assaults during a two-year period.

The secondary advantage of the scheme is that it provides economic incentives to businesses to reduce violence on their premises. The restrictions on the high risk or "Level 1" venues (Table 6.1) would lead to a significant impact on businesses' bottom line. Aside from the obvious losses in revenue from the restrictions on alcohol sales, venues in this category may lose their customers to other venues. As such, under this scheme businesses may recognise that it is in their economic interests to reduce violent behaviour in their venues, which may encourage them to invest money into initiatives such as ID scanners, security, CCTV, and training for staff.

In addition to the restrictions, the NSW Government intend to provide education and support to venues at all levels to assist them to reduce the number of incidents. The plan will be fully implemented in December, 2009.



7.0 Proposed Changes to Nightclub Trading Hours

Assuming the claims made in the police report are accurate, it does not follow logically that the most fair and effective solution is to only restrict nightclub trading hours.

The report claims the vast majority of incidents occur before 3am, with problems generally peaking between midnight and 2am. Table 7.1 contains data obtained directly from the police report, which clearly demonstrates a far greater number of problems occurring between 11pm and 3am than during the period of 3am and 7am. If this is the case, it would follow logically to reduce alcohol availability during these hours, assuming that reducing alcohol-related problems is the key objective. If closing nightclubs earlier was to succeed in reducing the harmful consequences of alcohol consumption, it would have a minimal impact on the overall problem as clearly outlined in the Police Report.

Table 7.1: Number of incidents in Northbridge by time period, for Friday and Saturday nights, for the 12-month period ending March 2009.

	Disorderly Conduct	Alcohol-related Incidents	Selected Offences Against the Person	Arrests/Summons	Total
7am – 7pm	3 (0.24%)	76 (2.30%)	26 (3.37%)	4 (0.88%)	109 (1.77%)
7pm – 11pm	159 (12.67%)	507 (15.34%)	73 (9.47%)	59 (12.97%)	798 (12.98%)
11pm – 3am	847 (67.49%)	2432 (73.56%)	477 (61.87%)	300 (65.93%)	4056 (65.95%)
3am – 7am	246 (19.60%)	652 (19.72%)	196 (25.42%)	93 (20.44%)	1187 (19.30%)

Source: WA Police

To illustrate this point, let us assume there is a perfect relationship between licensee trading hours and alcohol-related incidents (as they are defined in Table 7.1 above), such that a 100% cut in hours would lead to a 100% reduction in incidents. **If this was the case, closing all venues at 3am would have the effect of reducing alcohol-related incidents in Northbridge by 19.72%. However, reducing trading hours between 11pm and 3am by only 33% would reduce the number of alcohol-related incidents by 21.8%. Therefore, if the hours of venues are to be restricted in order to curb anti-social behaviour, it would be more logical to reduce the number of trading hours between 11am and 3am by lowering the number and concentration of venues operating within that period.**



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There is ample opportunity to reduce the number of premises selling alcohol between 12am and 3am when the problems are generally occurring; given that there are many hotels and pubs currently operating within those hours under ETPs and SFLs.

Indeed, the police report emphasises that there are currently seven venues operating under ETPs and nine under SFLs (in some cases operating until 3am), and notes that the recent increase in the concentration of such venues "perpetuates a 'high-risk' drinking environment."

However, although the police report strongly advocates winding back extended trading hours for these venues, it is understood this recommendation is unlikely to be adopted, with nightclub hours instead being targeted. Again, it is unclear why this approach would be considered the most appropriate course of action, given the Police report clearly outlines that (a) the majority of incidents occur between midnight and 2am, and (b) hotel licenses tend to have a higher associated assault rate than other licensees.

Furthermore, bringing forward nightclub closing times by up to three hours would amount to a significant change for the community, given that nightclubs have been able to operate until 6am since 1988. Since the proposed change can only have an impact on crime occurring after 3am, the question should be asked whether this potential benefit would offset the unintended negative consequences of closing Northbridge nightclubs earlier.

The following could be reasonably expected to occur if the Government decides to significantly reduce the trading hours of nightclubs:

- **Nightclub patrons may experience a significant impact on their enjoyment.** Based on figures provided by WANA, each nightclub in Northbridge accommodates many hundreds of customers in a single night. Reduction of nightclub trading hours would mean a large number of people will be affected across the entire precinct by the proposed changes. Furthermore, **consideration should be given to tourists, shift workers, and staff from earlier closing venues that will be faced with less choice and diversity in relation to their options for socialising.**
- **Businesses in the area, such as restaurants, would be impacted upon negatively if Northbridge becomes less attractive as an entertainment precinct, causing people to go out elsewhere.**



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- **Nightclub employees would some of their rostered working hours.** For example, in a venue trading two nights a week, an employee would lose up to six hours work per week, or 37.5% of the available hours (based on 3am closure). Nightclubs typically employ bar staff, door staff, promoters, security, sound & lighting technicians, and DJs.
- **Taxi services would experience increased demand.** Given that public transport does not operate after 2am and patrons would no longer be able to leave gradually between the hours of 3am and 6am this measure is likely to increase the very problems it seeks to address. Shortages could lead to a greater number of fights over taxis, as well as increased drink driving.
- **Cities such as Perth need a functional central nightlife precinct, such as Northbridge, to accommodate the large number of people that enjoy going out and socialising on weekends.** If the proposed changes are implemented other nightspots, such as Subiaco and Leederville, may attract greater numbers of people despite having far less venues than Northbridge to accommodate additional patrons. Such a situation could potentially only shift the problem and lead to greater problems in these areas.
- **A greater number of people may be forced into uncontrolled environments, which are more difficult for police to manage.** A nightclub has a range of security measures to ensure the safety of its patrons, such as security personnel, surveillance cameras, and ID scanners. Earlier closure of such environments could lead to a rise in the number of uncontrolled private parties, as well as an increase in other problems occurring in private residences such as domestic and other related violence. For instance, two men were recently attacked and severely injured at a beach in Mindarie (ABC News, 2009, October 26). Such incidents may be more likely if more people are forced into uncontrolled environments by lockouts and early closures.

Clearly, it is not only nightclub owners and customers that will be affected by the proposed changes, but a range of stakeholders including employees of licensees, business owners that have invested in Northbridge based on its role as Perth's central entertainment precinct, residents and business owners in the surrounding areas such as Subiaco, taxi drivers, and the broader Perth community as a whole. Consequently, any decision regarding the issue needs to consider the range of social and economic impacts on different individuals and groups.

8.0 Recommendations

From the critical analysis of the Police report and case studies from other jurisdictions, presented in this report, the following are a list of recommendations which represent a holistic approach to addressing the issues raised in the Police report.

These recommendations should be underscored with broad consultation with all stakeholders, evidence-based policy that addresses the core issues, and a fair and equitable approach, that does not discriminate against any particular stakeholder group.

Recommendations include:

- **Undertake a comprehensive review of all SFLs and ETPs currently granted to premises within the Northbridge Entertainment Precinct.**
- **Specifically target “high risk” venues that are making the largest contribution to the problem.** This could be achieved by using the Police’s “place of last drink” or on-premise assault numbers in the same way such data is being used in NSW to categorise venues according to risk and implement targeted restrictions. This would also provide incentives for better safety performance, as venues would be encouraged to minimise incidents by economic incentives.
- **Conduct further more detailed research and evaluation into the efficacy of late night lockouts based on trials / case studies in other national and international contexts.**
- **Provide stronger enforcement and regulation of the Act; particularly in regards to the responsible serving of alcohol.**
- **Provide all stakeholders a voice in the decision making process to ensure ownership of the strategies proposed.**
- **Improve public transport options and the availability of taxis in and out of Northbridge on weekends specifically.**
- **Facilitate the establishment of alternative nightlife options in other precincts such as the CBD and other inner city areas of Perth, in line with other large city development.**



9.0 Conclusion

Based on the evidence provided in the police report, it is not known whether reducing nightclub trading hours will result in a decline in antisocial/violent behaviour.

Furthermore, if reducing nightclub hours was to have the desired effect, it would only serve to reduce the number of problems occurring after 3am, which are known to be significantly fewer than those taking place between midnight and 2am.

The proposed reduction in nightclub trading hours would amount to a significant change for the industry and the community as a whole, so any decision to implement this strategy should not be made without careful consideration of its social and economic impacts.

Indeed, there is a considerable degree of risk that restricting hours in Northbridge will have a range of negative impacts on the community. These issues need to be thoroughly understood through a process of consultation with all relevant stakeholders, and more detailed research and analysis prior to taking action.

To date, WANA has only recently been invited to participate in such discussions, raising concerns about the extent to which the social and economic implications of the proposed changes have been adequately considered, and the views of stakeholders appropriately voiced and addressed. Furthermore, it is the position of the National Research and Drug Institute that further research and evaluation should be undertaken into the efficacy of late night lockouts and the long term benefits of such a policy, before any legislation is introduced. The NDRI recommendations should be strongly considered by the State Government before introducing such legislation.

Moving forward, WANA has signalled its desire to work through the relevant issues in a cooperative manner in order to find a fair and effective solution for all stakeholders. WANA has also indicated it would be prepared to reduce trading hours by one hour, but only if the same restriction was placed on hotels and pubs, and appropriate steps were taken to ensure the impact of such a trial / change is adequately measured and evaluated.



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