

Media Release

Tuesday, 17 September 2013

New approach to late night violence in Sydney

The City of Sydney has formally commissioned an innovative new approach to stop alcohol related violence and make our city safer and more welcoming late at night.

The Thomas Kelly Youth Foundation will team up with the independent, non-partisan research organisation newDemocracy Foundation to develop a new approach to solving the impasse.

A Citizens' Policy Jury of 43 participants, made up of randomly selected people not affiliated with any political parties, lobbyists or interest groups, will be convened for approximately three months.

Lord Mayor Clover Moore said improving late night safety would take a new approach to managing the often conflicting interests of community groups, the media and powerful lobbyists.

"We all want a thriving and diverse night time economy for Sydney that doesn't include violent, anti-social behaviour," the Lord Mayor said.

"This project aims to balance community safety and personal freedom, and deliver real and meaningful action for a safer late night culture.

"The City is already working in partnership with the NSW Government to tackle the issue of late night violence in our city and while there have been some important improvements, more needs to be done."

The Jury will be asked to come up with at least five recommendations to ensure we have a vibrant and safe Sydney nightlife.

Expert groups, interest groups, community groups and lobbyists will be invited to make their case, but the extent of their role will be in the hands of the randomly selected citizens – not organisers, facilitators, the City of Sydney or the NSW Government.

"On this issue, Councils and Government can find themselves in the no-win position of being seen as either 'the nanny state' or 'failing to protect our children'," said newDemocracy Foundation executive director Iain Walker.

"By asking everyday people to use their judgment to find common ground after being informed by experts of their own choosing, we expect to produce a set of useful recommendations which the public trust as they're being made by people like them."

The City has committed to consider and respond to each recommendation of the Jury. The Premier has agreed that the recommendations of the Jury will be taken to Parliament unaltered and unedited.

The expected total cost of the project is \$132,200. Primary funding will be shared equally by the City of Sydney and the NSW Government at \$60,000. The remaining funding is provided from a donation made to the Thomas Kelly Youth Foundation.

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The City will also provide meeting rooms and access to research conducted while developing the OPEN Sydney strategy.

The Jury will meet for six face-to-face meetings, complemented by an ongoing private discussion and an online library. It is expected the Jury will be convened early 2014. The project is based on a similar process currently being delivered for South Australian Premier Jay Weatherill.

"I hadn't appreciated just how politically complex this issue is. I just want a jury of people to really look at what is happening and for there to be a sensible and informed conversation which government listens to," Founding Director of the Thomas Kelly Youth Foundation, Ralph Kelly, said.

"We don't know what the outcome will be, but I think a Citizens Jury is a way to get beyond the simple back and forth between lobbies which goes nowhere. The Lord Mayor and the Premier have made this possible in Sydney for the first time."

For media enquiries contact City of Sydney Senior Media Adviser Rohan Sullivan phone 0414 617 086 or email rsullivan@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au

For interviews with Lord Mayor Clover Moore, contact Matt Levinson 0427 044 768 or mlevinson@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au

BACKGROUND

About The newDemocracy Foundation

The newDemocracy Foundation is a not-for-profit research group, with a particular focus on best practice citizen engagement and innovations in democratic structures.

They believe that by combining the three elements of random selection, the provision of time and access to all information, and independently facilitated forums for dialogue, a much more robust and publicly trusted outcome can be obtained which can assist governments in achieving public acceptance of hard trade-offs.

They are not a think tank and hold no policy views. They commission independent third party research to ensure robustness and to capture the potential for improvements to existing democratic processes.

The Citizens Policy Jury

Invitations to participate in the Jury will be extended to a randomly selected sample of 20,000 citizens from across metropolitan Sydney, complemented by an additional random draw from university and TAFE populations to maximise the response rate in the 18-24 category.

The Jury will be chosen to ensure a mix (matched to Census data) of age, gender and location.

They are asked to come up with a set of recommendations that are specific, measurable, actionable, realistic and attached to a timeline.

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