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MEDIA RELEASE

Temporal and regional aspects of alcohol-related violence and disorder

At least 58 per cent of offensive behaviour incidents and 23 per cent of assault incidents in NSW are alcohol-related according to a new study on alcohol-related violence and disorder carried out by the National Drug Research Institute and the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research.

These figures are likely to significantly understate the true level of alcohol-related violence and disorder in New South Wales because in many crime incidents police fail to record whether or not the incident is alcohol-related.

The joint study by the Institute and the Bureau examined regional variations in assault rates and found that alcohol was a common factor in incidents of violence.

The top ten Local Government Areas in the country, in terms of their assault rate were Central Darling, Bourke, Brewarrina, Walgett, Junee, Coonamble, Moree Plains, Guyra, Wentworth and Lachlan. In these LGAs the percentage of assault incidents which were recorded by police as alcohol-related hovered around forty per cent

The top ten Local Government Areas in the Sydney metropolitan area, in terms of their assault rate, were Sydney, South Sydney, Campbelltown, Blacktown, Botany Bay, Marrickville, Parramatta, Penrith, Leichhardt and Wyong. In these LGAs the percentage of assault incidents which were recorded by police as alcohol-related hovered around 18 per cent.

The rate of alcohol related assault is highest in the early hours of Saturday and Sunday morning (i.e. between midnight and 3am), when 55 per cent of assault incidents recorded by police are alcohol-related. This is five times higher than the proportion recorded as alcohol-related during the lowest assault risk periods (Tuesday 3pm-6pm, Saturday 6pm to 9pm and Friday 3pm to 6pm).

Alcohol-related offensive behaviour incidents appear to peak at similar times to those of assault, with nearly 90 per cent of such incidents being recorded as alcohol-related between 12am and 3am on Saturday morning and only 45 per cent of such incidents being recorded as alcohol-related between 3pm and 6pm on a Thursday.

These findings highlight the important role alcohol plays in violence, especially late at night on weekends. A forthcoming report from the National Drug Research Institute will report on recent trends in alcohol-related violence across all Australian States and Territories.

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