

Media Release
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Calling emergency service workers ‘wowers’ dismisses the seriousness of binge drinking

Reverend Harry Herbert today expressed disgust at the NSW State Government’s failure to consider the push made by frontline emergency workers to reform liquor laws across the State.

Executive Director of UnitingCare NSW.ACT, Rev. Herbert said that Premier Kristina Keneally’s comments were irresponsible and indicated an unwillingness to address the issue at hand after she dismissed the calls and branded the emergency services workers who made them ‘wowers’.

“Alcohol related issues are on the rise and the State Government should be looking at possible solutions put forward instead of sweeping them straight under the carpet.

“The reforms called for should be examined more closely - by all accounts, these directives have worked in Newcastle so they may be a viable option for reducing incidents of alcohol related assaults across the state,” Rev. Herbert said.

He continued, saying that he believed that a greater emphasis was needed on educating the dangers associated with heavy drinking.

“Once stigmatised by society, drinking to excess is now viewed as skill to be admired by many socialising on weekends.

“It’s not something to aspire to and education from all community sectors needs to reinforce the dangers of binge drinking – violent behaviour, flawed judgement, depression, nausea, alcohol poisoning, amnesia and addiction are just a few.”

Rev. Herbert said that his organisation dealt with the fallout from heavy drinking everyday, helping individuals and families who were experiencing difficulties with work, relationships, health and wellbeing as a result of excessive drinking.

“Responsible drinking needs to be on the agenda and the State Government should be working with the community and various bodies to encourage this – not just dismissing suggestions put forward as the commentary of ‘wowsers’.”

Rev. Herbert is urging the Government to work alongside distributors of alcohol such as pubs, clubs and bottle shops as well as community services providers, emergency services, school, universities and sporting clubs to establish ways to reduce the prevalence of binge drinking.

“I have nothing against a couple of drinks when socialising with friends but for too many people there is a perception that binge drinking is something to be proud of and we all have a role to take in changing that perception.”

The liquor reforms called for by emergency service workers are in response to an increasing amount of alcohol related assaults on frontline workers. Changes called for across NSW include a ban of shots, strong cocktails and double serves of spirits after 10pm, 1am lockouts and a closing time of 3am for all venues.

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For more information or for an interview with Reverend Harry Herbert, Executive Director, UnitingCare NSW.ACT, please call Ingrid Hoff, Public Relations Assistant, UnitingCare NSW.ACT on 02 8267 4374 or email ingridh@nsw.uca.org.au.