



Submission Per Precinct Licensing Statement With Particular
Reference To The Hindley Street Licensing Precinct

Submitted By Arna EYERS-WHITE On Behalf Of The Adelaide
West End Association
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Thank you for the opportunity to comment upon the Adelaide City Council's Precinct Licensing Plan.

Over the past six or so years, the Adelaide West End Association has made its views on the issue of licensing in the precinct known through a number of fora. Most recently, these views have been expressed through the Liquor Licensing Accord, the Lord Mayor's Precinct Forum, the Noise Management Reference Group and the West End Reference Group.

The issue was also addressed in the West End Partnership Strategy Paper, as recently presented to the Lord Mayor, Mr Michael Harbison, Adelaide CEO Mr Mal Hemmerling and Cr Susan Clearihan. The Strategy Paper was also presented in a separate meeting to the Minister For Adelaide, the Hon Jane Lomax-Smith.

In commenting here, the Association is reiterating, to a degree, views, proposals, suggestions and philosophies inherent within the Association's long term vision as outlined within the Strategy Paper.

The Association has noted the outcomes of the workshops held in North Adelaide and East End of Adelaide regarding their respective Precinct Character Statements, and the general concern and disappointment with these statements. The major issue in these areas, according to the workshops, is the conflict between, in the main, entertainment venues and residential requirements. While licensed outdoor dining is still an issue for North Adelaide, it would appear to have been generally addressed in the East End, with entertainment, and the dispersal of patrons from these venues, becoming the main focus.

The residential/licensed premises conflict is not an issue for the West End, although we do have some concerns in regards to increasing proposals for residential developments in the Precinct. We have already had the situation where one of our more popular live music venues, the Grace Emily in Waymouth Street, came under threat when a developer proposed to build next door. While this situation was eventually negotiated to a level of satisfaction, the residential development planned for the Balfours' site is of great concern to the Association; Light Square currently houses some eight late night venues, and a number of the proprietors, taking their cue from the East End, consider that their businesses are under threat.

The Association understands that the Adelaide City Council wishes to increase the number of residents in the city, and takes no issue with this plan. The insistence on 'mixed use' areas however, is of concern.

The theory of 'mixed use' has, presumably, guided the East End developments over the past decade or more. Retail stores, restaurants, entertainment venues and cinemas were encouraged, and business owners responded accordingly. Residents were also encouraged, with a number of apartment towers being developed to accommodate the demand. It was to be, we understand, a model of 'mixed use'.

Unfortunately, the experiment has patently failed. As 'empty nesters' have moved into the apartments, they have come to demand a diminishment of the vibrant city lifestyle that perhaps a more cosmopolitan residential population may have relished. This is reflected most obviously in the results of the East End Precinct Licensing workshop, where participants recommended that the Precinct be re-zoned as a residential area.

This is not a new development; residents have been making their dissatisfaction known for a number of years. The recommendation to change the Precinct zoning however, has set off very loud alarm bells for the West End Association.

THE WEST END PRECINCT

According to the Adelaide 21 Plan the West End Precinct has been designated the ‘entertainment precinct’, with particular regard to the late night economy. This is a sobriquet we are happy to claim, and to live up to, encouraging arts, music and adult entertainments of varying styles and appeal. At the same time, we are keen to have the area viewed as one that is appealing to visit, by varied audiences and patrons. Hence, our version of ‘mixed use’ is to encourage nightclubs, live music venues, entertainments such as games (both arcade and internet gaming), restaurants and cinemas. In promoting our daytime culture, we have also encouraged cafes, coffee shops, art galleries, business, arts organisations, retail stores and of course, the educational institutions which are adding immeasurably to our precinct culture. What we have not encouraged is residential developments that abut, are adjacent to or are within the prime entertainment district –Hindley Street, Waymouth Street and Light Square.

The developments in the East End, and to a lesser extent, in North Adelaide, indicate that there needs to be a re-think on the granting of venue licences within particular areas, and perhaps a re-defining of what ‘mixed use’ actually is, and what the repercussions of this policy have been. Putting the issue of noise emanating from venues aside for the moment, patrons moving between venues will also be of issue in a primarily residential zone, as will their leaving when the premises close. This is not, it should be noted, an issue in the West End.

Recommendations from both of these precincts have indicated that the residents would prefer the licensed premises in those precincts to have earlier closing hours, regardless of ‘prior use’. Currently, a number of these venues are licensed to remain open until 4 am.

There is an opportunity here for the Council to refine their precinct statements by acknowledging what has already been stated; that the West End is the primary entertainment district, and should be recognised as such.

This is not to say that the Association recommends that licences should be issued at random within the West End, nor that it should be an unencumbered 24 hour trading area. In the first instance, the precinct needs a greater variance of entertainments than are currently on offer, of a quality that will discourage poor behaviour from patrons and bad business practice by vendors.

In the second, the Association does not support 24 hour trading in the current environment. Inebriated patrons leaving licensed premises between 6 and 9 am have long been a blight on the landscape as they vomit, fight, abuse, beg and harass passers by who are on their way to work. There is little opportunity to properly cleanse the area because of this, and the Association continues to support the recommendations of the 2001 West End Licensing Statement which recommends closure of all premises for a period of some hours so that the area can be cleaned, and day time users are not threatened or harassed.

TAXIS

An area of concern to all precincts is the availability of taxis to speedily disperse patrons who require them. The AWEA has already called, in its Strategy Paper, for clearly defined taxi ranks in streets leading OUT of the precinct, in clearly signposted areas, with security cameras and excellent lighting. While we do not intend to repeat ourselves in this submission, in addition to our stated concerns we have become increasingly concerned, along with the general community, with the unlawful behaviour and actions of taxi drivers. It is our contention, more than ever, that such safety zones can only be of benefit to ALL parties.

LIQUOR LICENSING COMMISSION

The AWEA understands that resources are always an issue for government departments, particularly in the current climate. Therefore, we have difficulty calling upon the Commission to call more frequently upon licensed premises to ensure they are abiding by the conditions of their licences. However, we do call upon the Commission to actively use the powers available to them. A number of licensed venues are well known for their consistent transgressions, yet it is uncommon for them to be taken to task, much less for their trading to be suspended for any period of time. This is not just a West End observation; other precincts have come up against the same reluctance on behalf of the Commission to take action against its 'client' group.

There are many issues in and within the West end relating to social groupings and homelessness. It is the AWEA's contention that these are issues that have social, economic and political solutions, and are not part of a licensing review as such. As many of these groups/individual attend licensed premises, the margins can become blurred. Licensees have an obligation to act appropriately with this demographic; again, the Commission has to power to caution any licensee whose staff are seen to contravene any section of the law. We also note that conditions of licence, such as noise from loudspeakers, the placement of unapproved furniture on footpaths and the use of pedestrian obstructions such as poles and ropes continue to be flouted, with little or no penalty.

HINDLEY STREET LICENSING PRECINCT STATEMENT (LICENSED PREMISES)

We note that these conditions are considered 'NOT NEGOTIABLE', although there is room for variation on "case by case basis". Noting that it is the existing premises and their licensing hours which are causing issue at the moment, the AWEA recommends that all licensing transfers also be subject to these conditions.

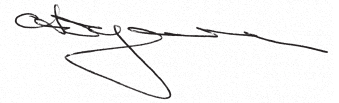
Similarly, the recommendation that garbage not be collected after 10 pm is patently unsuitable for an area such as Hindley Street, where rubbish bins can fill very quickly a number of times over, particularly on Friday and Saturday night.

SUMMARY

Adelaide's West End has the opportunity to become a premier entertainment district, an ideal which is sadly not a reality at this time. It is vital that the daytime culture be nurtured, to create a familiarity with the area, encouraging notions of safety and comfort. This will reflect immediately on the night time economy, as people feel comfortable coming here to seek their entertainment requirements. With licensed premises in residential areas closing at reasonable hours to appease neighbours, the West End can easily accommodate a late night economy without such concerns. At this time, beyond some notable exceptions there is not the variance of entertainment to encourage persons to Hindley Street; the main clientele are the 'drink hard party hard', which does create difficulties for those few venues who are attempting to trade beyond that demographic. Live music and younger people tend to attend premises elsewhere in the West End, and this is directly related to the nature of the licensed premises in Hindley Street, the lack of live music available, safety concerns and the general run down culture of the street.

The West End has often been quoted as the entertainment hub of Adelaide, but it has never really been nurtured by those who have the resources to do so. The culture can be changed; with clean streets, good lighting, varied entertainment, restaurants, responsible licensing, buildings in good and clean repair, and positive marketing, the West End can be the vibrant Precinct that much of Adelaide would like it to be.

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President

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