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## Assaults on licensed premises in inner-urban areas

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*The present bulletin examines police-recorded assault incidents on licensed premises in the inner-urban areas of Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong. Findings from this analysis suggest that a small number of problematic licensed premises are associated with a disproportionate amount of violence. In inner Sydney 12 per cent of hotels accounted for almost 60 per cent of all assaults on hotel premises, in Newcastle 8 per cent of licensed premises accounted for nearly 80 per cent of all assaults on licensed premises and in Wollongong 6 per cent of licensed premises accounted for 67 per cent of all on-premises assaults. The analysis also found that assault incidents on licensed premises were concentrated late at night or early in the morning and on weekends. Licence types identified as being the most problematic for violence on licensed premises were hotels and nightclubs. In particular, hotels with extended or 24-hour trading recorded a greater number of assaults compared with those trading standard hours. Other characteristics of licensed premises previously identified as being associated with harm are discussed.*

While criminological research has typically focused on offenders and characteristics which predict repeat offending, more recent research has highlighted the importance of place in understanding crime. Studies mapping the locations of crimes have repeatedly demonstrated that crime is not randomly distributed throughout space but is concentrated in particular places (e.g. Block & Block 1995; Jochelson 1997; Sherman, Gartin & Buerger 1989). These places, or crime 'Hot Spots', can be addresses, types of businesses, street blocks or neighbourhoods but are all specific locations where 'the occurrence of crime is so frequent that it is highly predictable, at least over a one-year period' (Sherman 1995 p.36). The fact that crime is highly predictable in these specific locations not only allows for more effective crime prevention strategies to be developed but also enables law enforcement agencies to focus their efforts more sharply on high-

risk places. In the context of alcohol-related crime the extent to which particular licensed premises are involved in a greater frequency and severity of problems compared with others in nearby areas is thus an important area of research.

### PREVIOUS RESEARCH

There is an extensive body of literature providing evidence for an association between licensed premises and alcohol-related harm, in particular, violent crime. For example, US research has demonstrated that geographical areas with higher concentrations of liquor outlets also have higher rates of violent crime. This relationship is evident even when possible confounders such as levels of unemployment, ethnic/racial makeup, income and age-structure are taken into account (Scribner, MacKinnon & Dwyer 1995). In Australia, a recent

analysis of the 1998 National Drug Strategy Household survey (NDSH) data reveals that more persons report being assaulted by an intoxicated person in pubs and clubs than in other locations. While verbal assault was reported as the most likely form of alcohol-related violence in a pub, 36 per cent of victims reported that the place where they had been physically assaulted was a pub/club (Teece & Williams 2000).

Research conducted both in Australia and overseas has also provided consistent evidence that some problematic licensed premises are associated with a disproportionate amount of alcohol-related problems. Stockwell, Rydon, Gianatti, Jenkins, Ovenden and Syed (1992) classified 15 licensed premises in Perth as either high- or low-risk based on the number of traffic accidents and/or drink-driving offences attributed to them by police. These estimates of risk were also

adjusted for the amount of alcohol purchased per annum at each venue. Patrons exiting both high- and low-risk premises on Friday and Saturday nights were interviewed about their self-perceived level of intoxication and were then breath-tested. The interviewers, who were blinded to the risk status of the premises, also made judgements as to how intoxicated each patron was. Stockwell and his colleagues found that patrons exiting the high-risk premises were more likely to have a blood alcohol level (BAL) in excess of 0.15 mg/ml, to report having consumed greater amounts of full strength beer and to have been rated by the interviewers as moderately or severely intoxicated.

Using the same risk ratio approach to classify 369 premises in the inner Perth metropolitan area, Stockwell, Somerford and Lang (1992) compared various licence types for their relative degree of risk or harm. It was found that licence type was highly predictive of risk, with hotels, taverns and nightclubs evidencing higher levels of harm compared with either restaurants or registered clubs. Stockwell (1997) further describes variation in terms of 'risk' within one of the at-risk licence types, namely hotels. This analysis classified 84 Perth hotels according to the level of risk of alcohol-related harm, based on the number of traffic accidents and drink-driving offences linked to each premises by police. A highly skewed distribution of risk across these hotels was revealed, whereby only a small percentage of the premises were classified as at higher risk for alcohol-related traffic accidents and driving offences.

Hemel and Clark (1994) conducted an observational study of licensed premises in Sydney which examined incidents of violence both within a sub-sample of 11 licensed premises previously identified as at high risk for violence and a random sample of 25 premises from 17 different areas of Sydney. Observations were made across 45 sites within these 36 premises (some premises had several bars or entertainment areas which permitted drinking) and occurred predominantly on weekends and after 8pm. One hundred and two aggressive incidents were recorded in the 300 hours of

observation, though only 29 of these actually involved physical aggression. Importantly, however, Hemel and Clark (1994) found that over three-quarters of the incidents involving physical aggression were concentrated in less than one-fifth of the sites and that two-thirds of the sites had no violent incidents recorded at all. Sites within the same premises were also highly correlated with each other with respect to incidents of aggression. A similar pattern of clustering within premises was found for aggressive incidents classified as non-violent in nature, with almost 85 per cent of these incidents occurring at only one-quarter of the sites.

Considine, Walker, Wiggers, Daly, Hazell and Fairhall (1998) report results from the pilot phase of a 'Linking Project' conducted in the Newcastle police district. In this project, police collected additional information for all crime incidents they attended to assess the possible role of alcohol as a factor in the incident. One piece of information collected was the last place of drinking before the incident occurred. This procedure enabled incidents classified as 'alcohol-related' to be 'linked' to drinking at individual licensed premises. Considine et al. (1998) reported that of the 400 or more licensed premises in the area, only 21 had an above average number of alcohol-related incidents, with four premises in particular accounting for a large majority of these.

In a previous study conducted by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, Jochelson (1997) examined all incidents of assault and robbery recorded by police in inner Sydney between July 1995 and June 1996. Using crime mapping methodology, Jochelson identified a number of crime Hot Spots for these two offence types in inner Sydney. These Hot Spots include the Central Business District (CBD), the Rocks, Kings Cross and Oxford Street in Darlinghurst. While almost half of the assaults were recorded in outdoor locations, approximately one-third and one-quarter were recorded on licensed premises in the Kings Cross and Darlinghurst Hot Spots, respectively. Furthermore, despite the fact that these two 'zones' contain numerous licensed premises only a small number of venues (approximately three) within each Hot

Spot accounted for the vast majority of on-premises assaults.

A similar study of licensed venues in the United States has provided further evidence that only a small number of licensed premises can be considered the most problematic for violent crime. In a study of taverns in the Milwaukee area, Sherman, Rogan and Velke (1991; cited in Sherman 1992) showed that only 12 per cent of all taverns produced over half of the 2,019 violent offences reported between 1986 and 1989, while 40 per cent of taverns in this area had no violent incidents over the same four-year period. They also extended these findings to the Kansas City area, where it was found that only 10 per cent of taverns produced half of the 2,757 violent offences reported between 1985 and 1989, with 31 per cent of taverns reporting no violence.

## THE PRESENT STUDY

Clearly a myriad of factors contribute to the number of problems associated with particular licensed premises (for a review see Hemel 1999). Unravelling the specific role played by each of these factors is a complex undertaking. In order to successfully identify the role of various risk factors in alcohol-related crime it is important that the distribution of harmful outcomes across licensed premises be better understood. Such information would be of valuable assistance in the planning and structuring of interventions aimed at reducing the level of harm associated with licensed premises.

The current study builds on previous research by examining in more detail the distribution of violent crime across licensed premises in the inner-urban areas of Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong. In particular, it attempts to provide an accurate quantification of the proportion of premises that account for the majority of on-premises assaults in each of these three localities. The analysis also examines characteristics of violent crime on licensed premises in inner-urban areas, such as the time of day and day of week that assaults typically occur, as well as the licence type of problematic premises. To investigate a possible risk factor

associated with violence on licensed premises, a secondary analysis of assault incidents at inner Sydney hotels was conducted, comparing the trading hours of repeat-assault hotels with those that recorded no or very few assault incidents. Given the difficulty of attributing outdoor assaults to particular premises in areas of high liquor-outlet density (e.g. Darlinghurst Road, Kings Cross and Oxford Street, Darlinghurst), this analysis is restricted to assaults occurring on licensed premises. In doing so we are assuming that high frequency repeated victimisation on particular premises is a valid marker for more general problems associated with a particular venue. This is a reasonable assumption, given the previously cited evidence documenting higher blood alcohol levels and overt signs of intoxication from patrons exiting high- as opposed to low-risk premises in Perth (Stockwell, Rydon, Gianatti, Jenkins, Ovenden & Syed 1992).

### ASSAULTS ON INNER SYDNEY LICENSED PREMISES

Data used in this analysis were extracted from the NSW Police Service's Computerised Operational Policing System (COPS) for the period July 1998 through June 2000. All assaults on licensed premises in the inner Sydney postcodes 2000 (Sydney, Darling Harbour & Haymarket), 2007 (Ultimo), 2009 (Pyrmont), 2010 (Surry Hills & Darlinghurst) and 2011 (Kings Cross, Potts Point, Woolloomooloo, Elizabeth Bay & Rushcutters Bay) that were recorded by police over the two-year period were examined.<sup>1</sup> To account for errors in the allocation of postcodes to assault incidents in COPS, a geographically defined boundary surrounding these five postcodes was specified and all assaults on licensed premises located within this boundary were also included in the analysis.<sup>2,3</sup>

In our examination of assaults on licensed premises, this particular area of inner Sydney was selected for the analysis for several reasons. Firstly, it contains numerous entertainment venues, including hotels, clubs and restaurants, which attract a large number

of people from the surrounding densely populated areas. Secondly, four geographical 'zones' that previous research has identified as being Hot Spots for violent crime, and in particular assaults on licensed premises (Jochelson 1997), are located within this area of Sydney. Finally, the five postcodes contained within the specified boundary accounted for approximately 10 per cent of all assaults recorded on licensed premises in NSW between July 1998 and June 2000.

For each incident recorded in COPS, a *property name*, *street number* and *street name* can be entered for the location where the incident occurred. In the present analysis, the *property name* was used to identify the licensed premises involved in each assault incident. The *property name* was then verified against a database provided by the NSW Department of Gaming and Racing which contained the premises names, addresses and licence numbers of all the licensed venues in NSW.<sup>4</sup> If the *property name* did not match any venues included in the Gaming and Racing database or was missing for a particular incident, the *street number* and *street name* was used to obtain an address for the licensed premises. This address was then matched to the licensed premises name recorded in the Gaming and

Racing database. If both the *property name* and the street address were incorrect or missing, the narrative section of the police incident report was accessed directly from the COPS system and the licensed premises name obtained from the narrative was then verified against the Gaming and Racing database.<sup>5</sup> Once the premises name had been determined for each assault incident, the licence number was identified and used as the unit of analysis for further calculations.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, any assaults occurring at venues where either the licence name had changed, the licence had been transferred to another licensee, or more than one bar was operating under the same licence during the two-year period, were included under the one licence number.

As shown in Table 1, 1,153 assault incidents occurred on licensed premises in inner Sydney between July 1998 and June 2000.<sup>7</sup> Just over three-quarters of these incidents occurred at venues which could be classified, according to their licence type, as a hotel. Six per cent of assaults on licensed premises occurred at venues classified as nightclubs and a further six per cent at restaurants. Sixty-five assault incidents (6%) occurred at the Sydney Casino, a venue that includes various types of bars and licensed restaurants.

**Table 1: Number of assault incidents in inner Sydney by type of licensed premises, July 1998-June 2000**

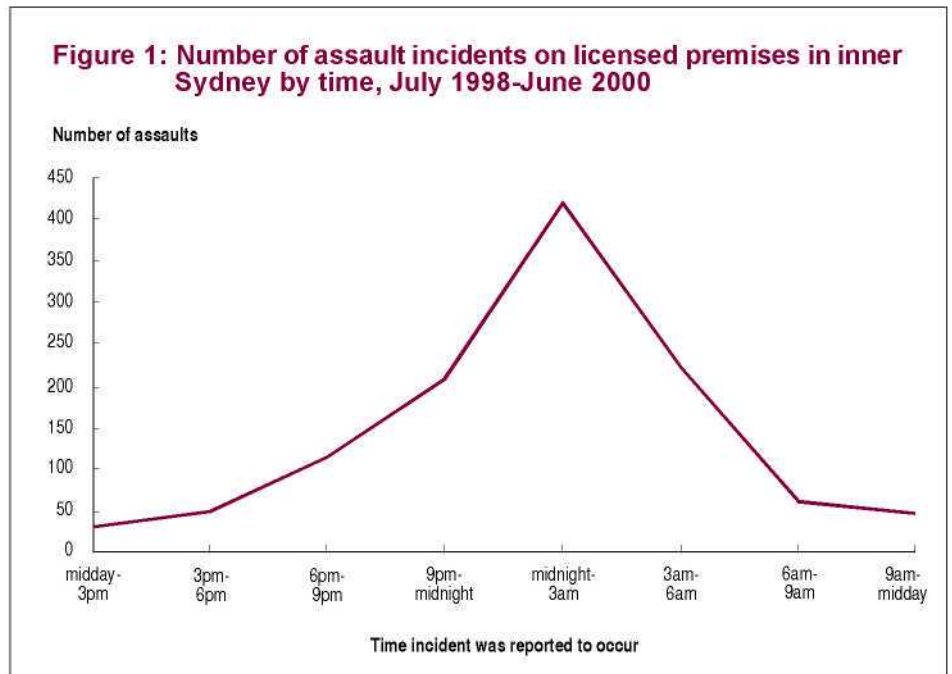
<i>Licence type</i>	<i>No. assault incidents</i>	<i>% assault incidents</i>
Hotel ( <i>n</i> =223)	871	75.5
Registered club ( <i>n</i> =41)	38	3.3
Restaurant ( <i>n</i> =535)	67	5.8
Nightclub ( <i>n</i> =29)	66	5.7
Theatre ( <i>n</i> =24)	16	1.4
Casino ( <i>n</i> =1)	65	5.6
Other* ( <i>n</i> =235)	15	1.3
Unknown	15	1.3
<b>Total (<i>n</i>=1,088)</b>	<b>1,153</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Note: *n* equals the total number of premises in inner Sydney issued this licence type

\* Includes all off-licences, on-licences for motels, public halls, universities, colleges, vessels and functions, and governor's licences.



Although nightclubs only account for a relatively small percentage of all assault incidents on licensed premises in inner Sydney, it should be remembered that there are considerably less premises operating under a nightclub licence type in this area than there are hotels. It is also worth noting that while the vast majority of assault incidents occurred at licensed premises classified as hotels, some of these venues appear to be very similar to licensed premises classified as nightclubs (i.e. they offer similar entertainment which attracts particular types of patrons, are open late at night on weekends and can advertise themselves as nightclubs). In these specific cases there would not be substantial operational differences between these two types of licensed premises.



**TEMPORAL ASPECTS OF ASSAULTS ON LICENSED PREMISES**

One of the most robust findings in alcohol and crime research is that alcohol-related incidents frequently occur late at night or in the early hours of the morning and on weekends (see Briscoe & Donnelly 2001; Devery 1992; Ireland & Thommeny 1993; Jochelson 1997; Chikritzhs, Stockwell & Masters 1997). Similar results are evident from our examination of assault incidents on licensed premises. Figure 1 shows the number of assaults on licensed premises in inner Sydney between July 1998 and June 2000 by the time at which they were reported to occur. The number of assault incidents on licensed premises during the study period increased markedly from 6pm onwards, peaking between midnight and 3am with 420 assaults (36%) reported to occur during this three-hour time period. Slightly more assaults on licensed premises occurred between 3am and 6am (19%) than between 9pm and midnight (18%). This is despite the fact that fewer licensed premises would be operating after 3am and, presumably, fewer people would be visiting licensed venues. Increased intoxication levels of patrons during these peak times and the pooling of intoxicated patrons into premises with later closing times are possible explanations for this temporal pattern.

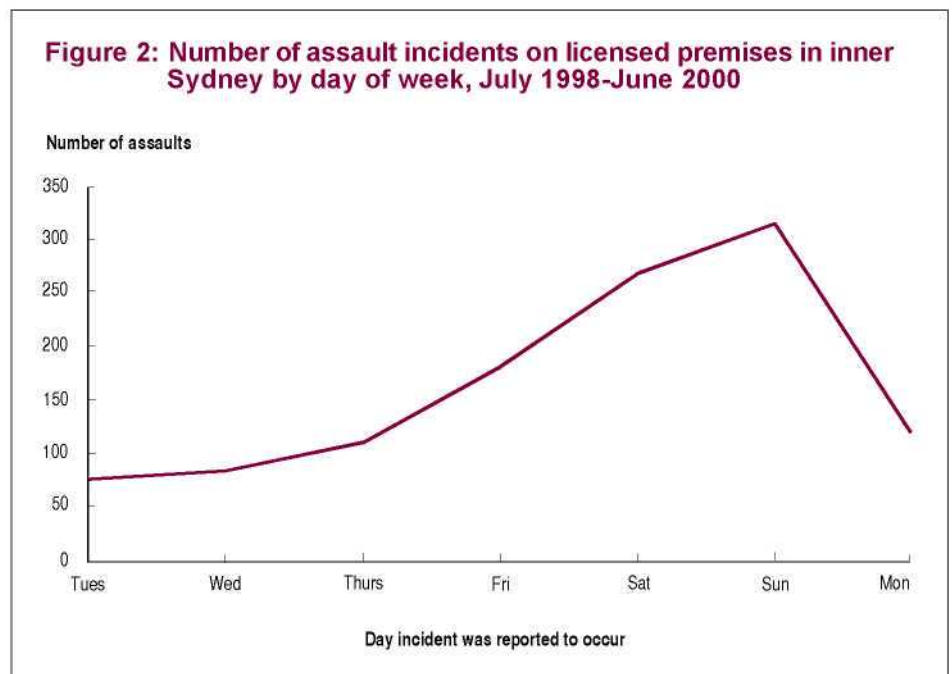


Figure 2 presents the total number of assaults on licensed premises in inner Sydney during the period July 1998 through June 2000 by the day on which the incident was reported to occur. A relatively large majority (66%) of all assaults on licensed premises recorded during the two-year period occurred on weekends, with the number of assault

incidents on licensed premises peaking on Sunday. At first glance the finding that more assaults occur on Sunday than on Saturday or Friday night would seem surprising. However, when examining both the time and the day on which the incident was reported to occur it becomes evident that the early hours of Sunday morning between 12am and

**Table 2: Top 10 three-hour time periods (day & time) for assault incidents on licensed premises in inner Sydney, July 1998-June 2000<sup>8</sup>**

<i>Day, time</i>	<i>No. assault incidents</i>	<i>% total assault incidents on licensed premises</i>
Sunday, 12am-3am	145	12.6
Saturday, 12am-3am	118	10.2
Sunday, 3am-6am	77	6.7
Friday, 9pm-12am	69	6.0
Saturday, 3am-6am	58	5.0
Monday, 12am-3am	43	3.7
Saturday, 9pm-12am	41	3.6
Friday, 12am-3am	36	3.1
Wednesday, 12am-3am	29	2.5
Friday, 6pm-9pm	27	2.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>643</b>	<b>55.8</b>

3am is the most likely time for assaults to occur on licensed premises (see Table 2). Similarly, assaults frequently occurred in the early hours of Saturday morning between 12am and 3am. These two time periods alone accounted for 23 per cent of all the assaults on licensed premises in inner Sydney. The rise in assaults during the Saturday and Sunday early morning time periods reflects the fact that more people would be visiting hotels and nightclubs on Friday and Saturday nights than at any other time. Presumably patrons are also more likely to be highly intoxicated late in the night and early the following morning. Both of these factors would increase the risk of violent incidents occurring on licensed premises at these times.

**CHARACTERISTICS OF PERSONS INVOLVED IN ASSAULTS ON LICENSED PREMISES**

**Table 3: Gender profile of victim and POIs for assault incidents on licensed premises in inner Sydney, July 1998-June 2000**

	<i>No. assault incidents</i>	<i>% assault incidents</i>	<i>Mean age (SD)</i>	<i>Median age</i>
<b>Gender of victim</b>				
Male	930	80.9	30 (9)	28
Female	174	15.1	28 (9)	26
Both male & female victims	45	3.9	26 (5)	25
<b>Gender of POI</b>				
Male	512	87.5	29 (8)	28
Female	67	11.5	28 (7)	28
Both male & female POIs	6	1.0	27 (6)	26

Information concerning both the victim and the alleged offender (Person of Interest) can be recorded by police for each assault incident reported on the COPS database. Each of these incidents can have more than one victim and/or more than one offender. For assaults on licensed premises in inner Sydney, details about the victim were recorded for all 1,153 incidents, but details about the Person of Interest (POI) were recorded for only half of these incidents. In comparison with the remainder of NSW, significantly fewer POIs were recorded for assaults on inner Sydney licensed premises (51%) than were recorded for assaults on licensed premises across the rest of NSW (70%).<sup>9</sup> This is likely to reflect the fact that inner Sydney has a high transient population and therefore, many of the persons involved in assaults may not be known either to the victim, bar staff or witnesses of the incident. The gender and age (mean, median and standard deviation) of all victims and POIs recorded by police are included in Table 3.<sup>10</sup> Just over 80 per cent of victims were male with an average age of 30 years. Of those incidents where the gender of the POI was recorded, 88 per cent of incidents involved an alleged offender who was male. The average age of POIs who were identified in

**Table 4: Assault incidents on licensed premises in inner Sydney by type of assault, July 1998-June 2000**

<i>Assault type</i>	<i>No. assault incidents</i>	<i>% assault incidents</i>
Common assault	678	58.8
Actual bodily harm	392	34.0
Grievous bodily harm	63	5.5
Assault officer	19	1.6
Shoot with intent other than to murder	1	0.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,153</b>	<b>100.0</b>

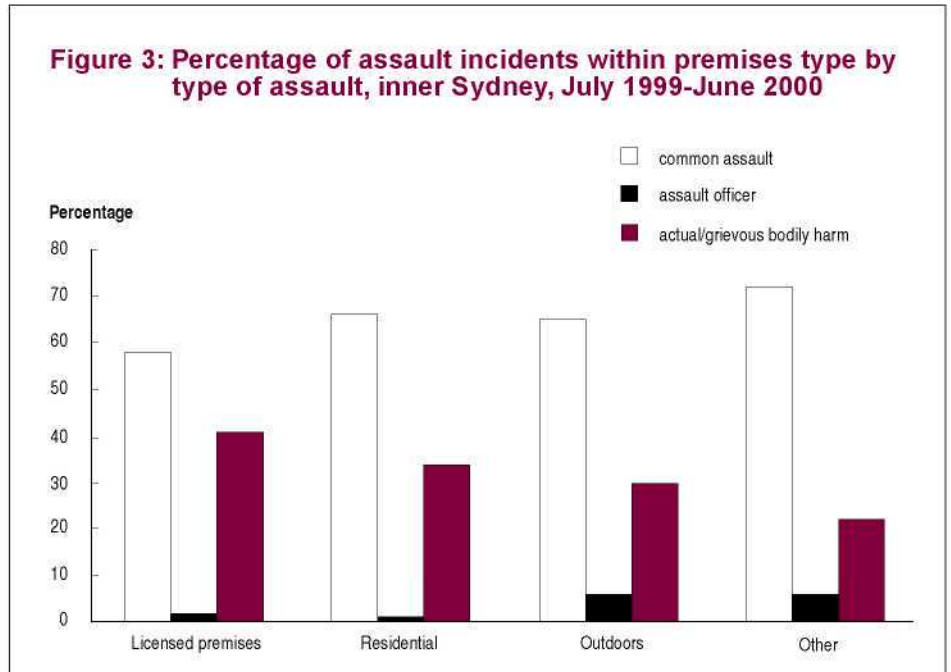
assault incidents on licensed premises was 29 years. Thus, most assaults on licensed premises in inner Sydney involved both young male victims and young male POIs.

**SEVERITY OF ASSAULTS ON LICENSED PREMISES**

Table 4 shows the number of assault incidents on licensed premises in inner Sydney by the type of assault recorded by the police. While the majority of assaults on licensed premises in inner Sydney were classified by police as common assaults, a substantial number involved more serious harm to the victim(s). For 455 incidents (39%), the assault was recorded by police as being one which occasioned either actual or grievous bodily harm. Furthermore, in comparison with assaults occurring on other types of premises in the inner Sydney area, assaults on licensed premises appear to have involved more physical harm to the victim(s). Figure 3 presents the percentage of assault incidents on each type of premises by the seriousness of the assault for the period July 1999 through June 2000.<sup>11</sup> As can be seen from Figure 3, more assaults on licensed premises occasioned actual or grievous bodily harm than assaults on all other premises types. This difference was found to be statistically significant.<sup>12</sup> The increased harm associated with assaults on licensed premises may be due to the fact that the persons involved would have easier access to weapons such as beer glasses and bottles (see Shepherd 1994) or that they are young males who are strong and fit. This pattern of offending should, however, be interpreted with caution since it could also reflect a tendency on the part of licensed premises or victims to seek police assistance only for more serious assaults.

**ASSAULTS AT INNER SYDNEY HOTELS**

In the previous section we saw that just over 75 per cent of all assaults on licensed premises in inner Sydney occurred at venues which have a hotel licence. This is despite the fact that hotels represent only 21 per cent



**Table 5: Total number of each licence type in inner Sydney, November 2000**

Licence type	No. licences issued	% all licences
Hotel	223	20.5
Registered Club	41	3.8
Restaurant	535	49.2
Nightclub	29	2.7
Theatre	24	2.2
Casino	1	0.1
Other*	235	21.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,088</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\* Includes all off-licences, on-licences for motels, public halls, universities, colleges, vessels and functions, and governor's licences.

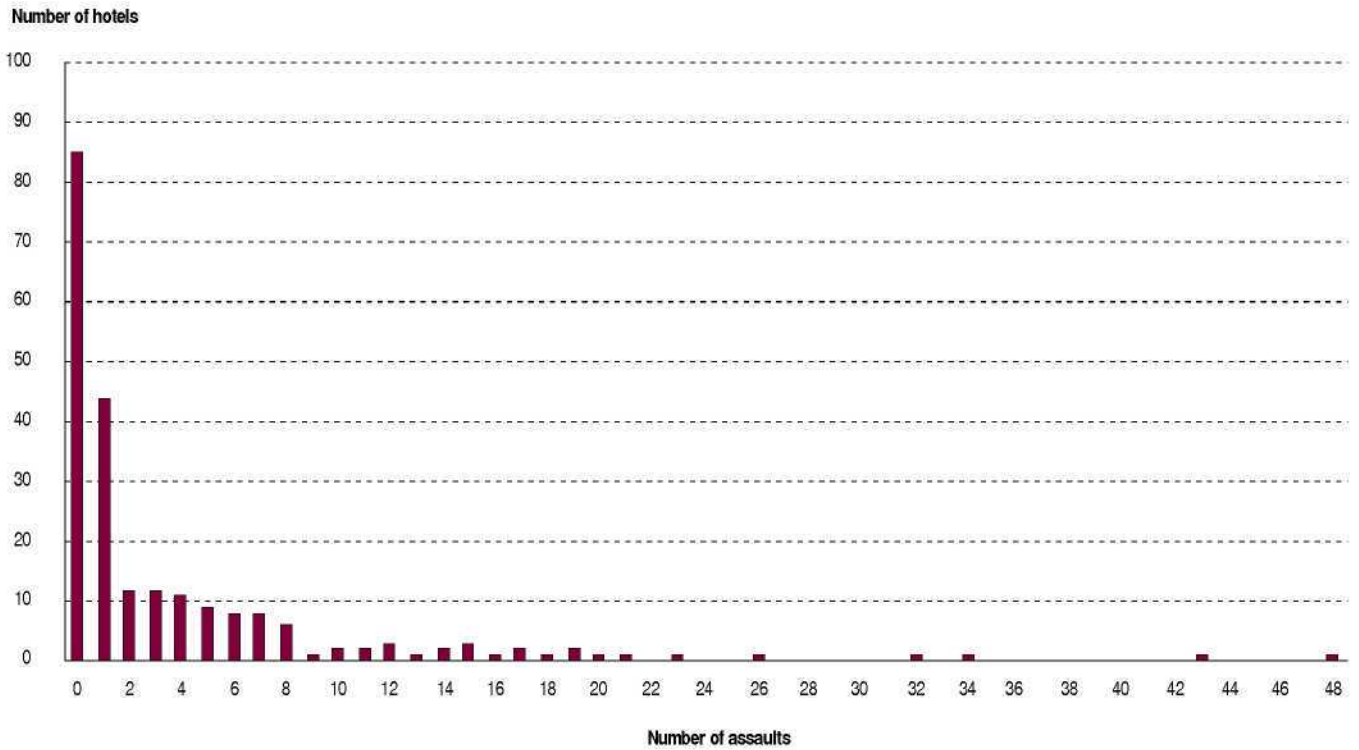
of all licensed premises in this area (see Table 5). Furthermore, it appears that only a small proportion of all hotels account for the majority of assaults in hotels. This point is illustrated by Figure 4, which graphs all the hotels included in the inner Sydney district by the number of assaults occurring on their premises for the period July 1998 through June 2000. One important observation from these data is that 85 (38%) out of a total of 223 hotels in inner Sydney recorded no assaults on their premises

during the two-year study period.<sup>13</sup> However, 27 hotels (12%) had 10 or more assaults reported to have occurred on their premises during the same two years.

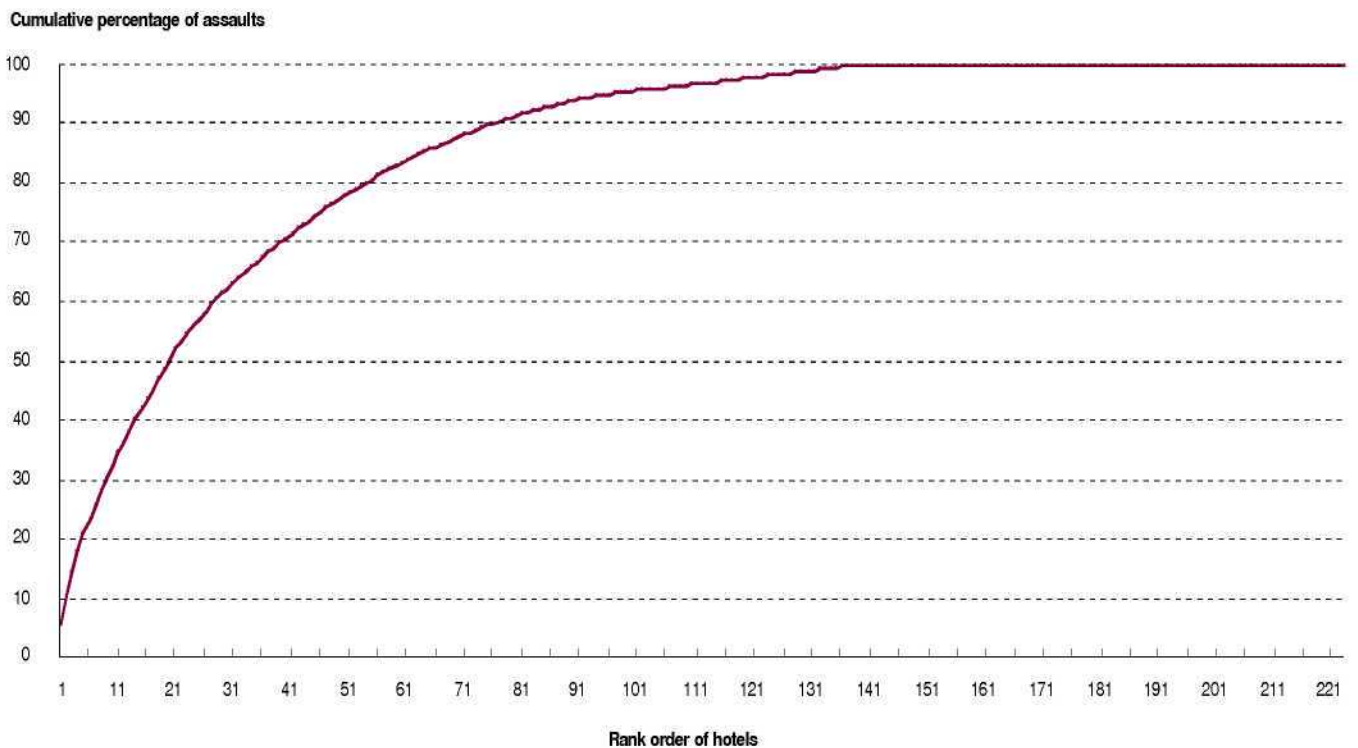
To further illustrate this point, the cumulative distribution for assaults at inner Sydney hotels is displayed in Figure 5. This graph, which shows the percentage of assaults accounted for by a given number of hotels, ranks inner Sydney hotels by the number of assaults on their premises during the two-year



**Figure 4: Frequency distribution of hotels in inner Sydney by number of assault incidents, July 1998-June 2000**



**Figure 5: Cumulative percentage of assault incidents at hotels in inner Sydney, July 1998 - June 2000**

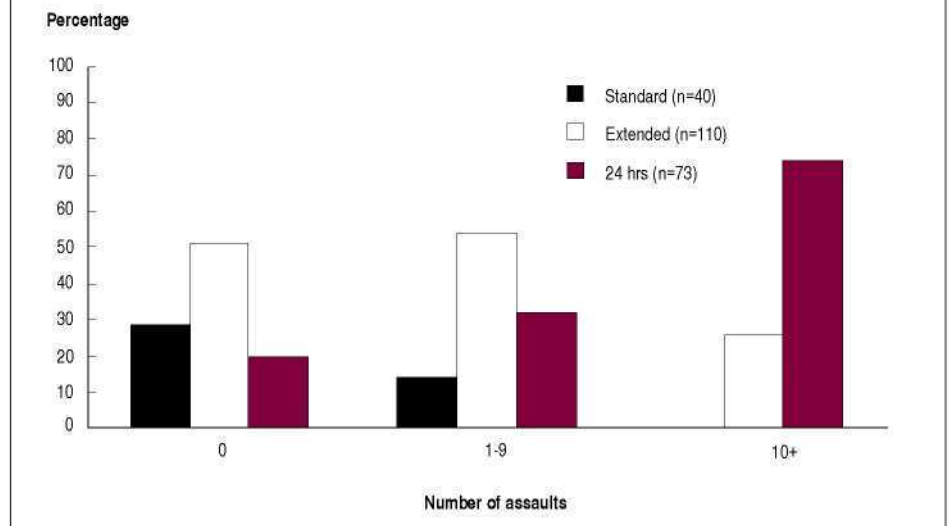


study period. Figure 5 shows that the top 27 hotels accounted for 59 per cent of all assaults at hotels in inner Sydney (i.e. a total of 517 assault incidents). Seven of these top 27 hotels (3%) recorded 26 per cent of all assaults at inner Sydney hotels or 227 assault incidents during the two years. These findings suggest that not all hotels are at high risk of repeat assault incidents on their premises but rather only a small proportion. A similar distribution of risk was found for hotels in the Perth area, with the majority of premises categorised as low-risk for alcohol-related offences and only a small number of hotels falling into the high-risk group (Stockwell 1997).

One question which arises from the above results is what distinguishes hotels which have repeat assault incidents from those which have no or very few assault incidents reported to police. If we consider that 56 per cent of assaults on licensed premises occur between 12am-3am and 3am-6am (see Figure 1), then hotels which trade later than midnight (i.e. non-standard trading hours) would be expected to have more assaults occurring on their premises. Support for this proposition was found when we examined the authorised trading hours of the hotels where numerous assaults occurred during the two-year study period. Figure 6 presents the percentage of inner Sydney hotels with standard, extended and all-week 24-hour trading by the number of assaults occurring on their premises.<sup>14</sup> This figure shows that the vast majority (74%) of hotels which had 10 or more assaults on their premises during the study period also had authorisation to trade on a 24-hour basis. In contrast, no inner Sydney hotels with standard trading hours had 10 or more assaults on their premises during the two-year period.<sup>15</sup> These findings concur with previous research, which found that after extended trading permits were granted to particular hotels/taverns in Perth, Western Australia, the monthly assault rate associated with those licensed premises more than doubled while remaining static for premises without extended trading (Chikritzhs, Stockwell & Masters 1997).

An important characteristic of inner Sydney which distinguishes it from other

**Figure 6: Percentage of hotels with extended trading hours by number of assault incidents on premises, inner Sydney, July 1998-June 2000**



suburban and rural areas is that many people visit this area not only because it has a greater number of hotels, nightclubs and restaurants, but also because these entertainment venues are often open much later than venues in other districts. This relatively large number of persons visiting the area, combined with the fact that some people may already be intoxicated prior to their patronage of late-night venues, could contribute to an increased risk of violence occurring at 24-hour hotels. However, although the majority of problematic hotels had 24-hour trading licences, 20 per cent of hotels that recorded no assaults also had authorisation for 24-hour trading. This suggests that, in addition to extended trading hours, other factors also increase the risk of violence at hotels. Further research is needed to better identify the characteristics of licensed premises that are associated with repeat assault incidents.

### ASSAULTS ON LICENSED PREMISES IN OTHER URBAN AREAS

To determine whether a small number of licensed premises account for a large proportion of alcohol-related harm in urban areas other than inner Sydney, we examined assaults on licensed

premises that were reported to police in the inner city areas of Newcastle (postcodes 2300, 2302, 2303) and Wollongong (postcode 2500). This analysis also used COPS data covering the period July 1998 through June 2000 and involved the same procedure for identifying licensed premises as previously outlined for the inner Sydney area. These two urban centres were selected because they contain numerous hotels, clubs and other licensed premises that attract people from the surrounding areas and thus, are very similar to the inner Sydney district previously examined. Furthermore, the four postcodes examined account for a large majority of all assaults on licensed premises in the Newcastle and Wollongong Local Government Areas (LGA). Postcodes 2300, 2302 and 2303 accounted for 71 per cent of all assault incidents on licensed premises in the Newcastle LGA and postcode 2500 accounted for half of all assault incidents on licensed premises in the Wollongong LGA during the period July 1998 through June 2000.

### NEWCASTLE

During the two-year study period 295 assault incidents on licensed premises in Newcastle were reported to police.<sup>16</sup> An analysis of these assault incidents revealed that, as with inner Sydney, the



**Table 6: Number of assault incidents in Newcastle by type of licensed premises, July 1998-June 2000**

Licence type	No. assault incidents	% assault incidents
Hotel/nightclub (n=32)	261	88.5
Registered club (n=11)	26	8.8
Restaurant (n=54)	2	0.7
Other* (n=30)	1	0.3
Unknown	5	1.7
<b>Total (n=127)</b>	<b>295</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Note: n equals the total number of premises in Newcastle issued this licence type

\* Includes all off-licences, on-licences for motels, public halls, universities, colleges, vessels and functions, and governor's licences.

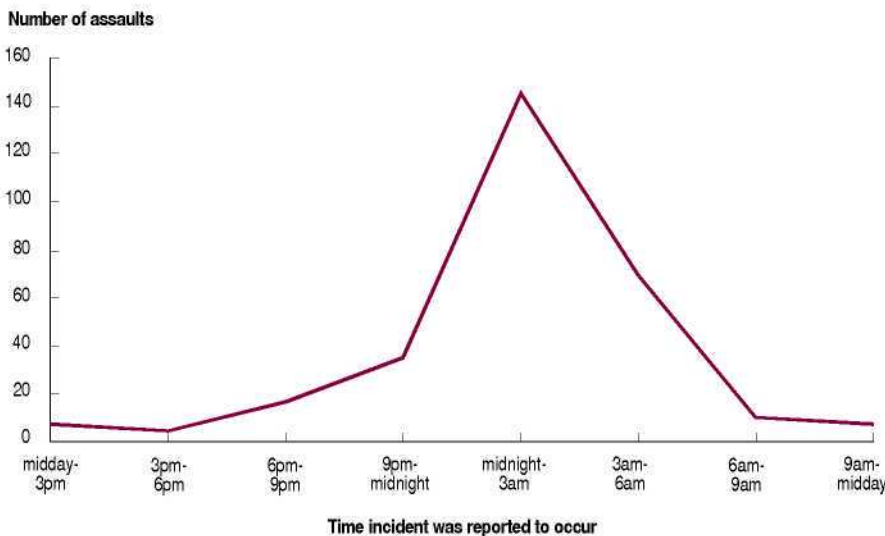
majority of assaults on licensed premises are confined to a small number of establishments. Only 10 licensed premises (8% of all licensed premises) in Newcastle had 10 or more on-premises assault incidents recorded by police during the two-year study period. These 10 venues recorded a total of 233 assaults or 79 per cent of all assault incidents recorded on licensed premises in the Newcastle area. Just five of these 10 venues, or four per cent of all licensed venues, recorded over half of all assault incidents on Newcastle's licensed premises.

The finding that hotels and nightclubs account for a disproportionate number of assault incidents was as apparent as for the inner Sydney area. From Table 6 it can be seen that, although hotels/nightclub<sup>17</sup> only comprise one quarter of all licensed premises in Newcastle, they account for 88 per cent of all assaults on licensed premises.<sup>18</sup> One other type of licensed premises which was identified in numerous assault incidents in Newcastle was registered clubs. Again, assault incidents were confined to a small number of these licensed premises. Twenty-six assault incidents (9%) occurred at registered clubs in Newcastle but of these, 23 incidents occurred at one individual club.

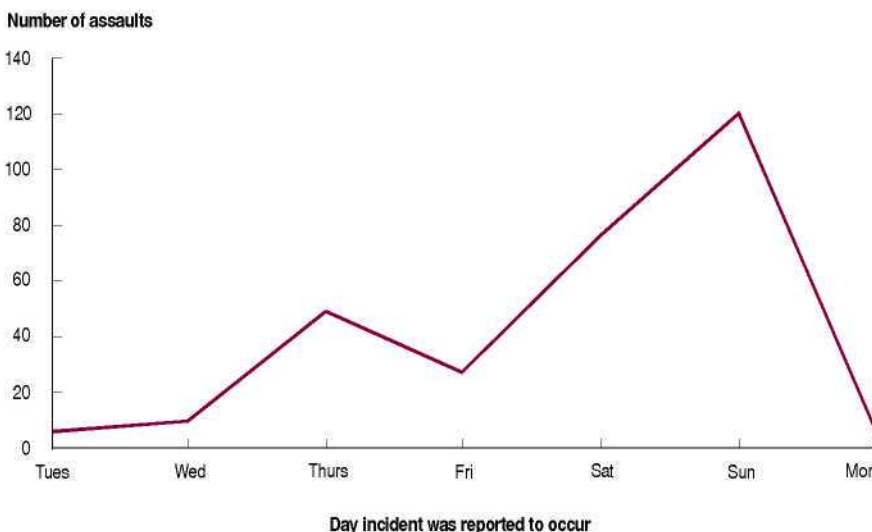
Data on the time of day that assault incidents were reported to occur indicate that the vast majority of assaults on licensed premises in Newcastle occurred either late at night or early in the morning. Figure 7 shows that assault incidents on licensed premises peaked between midnight and 3am, with half of all assaults occurring within this three-hour period. The second most frequent time for assaults on licensed premises in Newcastle was between 3am and 6am. Figure 8 shows all assaults on licensed premises in Newcastle, by the day the incident was reported to occur. As with inner Sydney licensed premises, the majority (66%) of all assaults on licensed premises in Newcastle occurred on Saturdays and Sundays.

However, Newcastle differed from inner Sydney in that more assaults on licensed premises occurred on Thursdays than on Fridays (17% vs. 9%). Furthermore, when we examine the time of day and the day of week for assault

**Figure 7: Number of assault incidents on licensed premises in Newcastle by time, July 1998-June 2000**



**Figure 8: Number of assault incidents on licensed premises in Newcastle by day of week, July 1998-June 2000**



**Table 7: Top 5 three-hour time periods (day & time) for assault incidents on licensed premises in Newcastle, July 1998-June 2000**

Day, time	No. assault incidents	% total assault incidents on licensed premises
Sunday, 12am-3am	71	24.1
Saturday, 12am-3am	39	13.2
Sunday, 3am-6am	34	11.5
Thursday, 12am-3am	22	7.5
Saturday, 3am-6am	21	7.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>63.4</b>

incidents (see Table 7), it appears that this difference is mostly due to an increased number of assaults on licensed premises between midnight and 3am on Thursdays. This probably reflects a difference between the two areas in the days when drinkers are more likely to patronise licensed premises. It is also noteworthy that the five three-hour time periods included in Table 7 accounted for almost two-thirds of all assaults on licensed premises in Newcastle. In comparison, ten three-hour time periods could only account for 56 per cent of all assaults on licensed premises in inner Sydney (see Table 2). This would suggest that assault incidents on licensed venues in Newcastle are even more concentrated at particular times of the day and the week than assault incidents on licensed premises in inner Sydney.

**Table 8: Number of assault incidents in Wollongong by type of licensed premises, July 1998-June 2000**

Licence type	No. assault incidents	% assault incidents
Hotel (n=11)	120	60.6
Registered club (n=11)	12	6.1
Restaurant (n=42)	2	1.0
Nightclub (n=6)	61	30.8
Other* (n=33)	3	1.5
<b>Total (n=103)</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**WOLLONGONG**

Table 8 presents the number of assault incidents in Wollongong by the type of licensed premises on which the incident occurred. From a total of 198 assaults on licensed premises in Wollongong,<sup>19</sup> 61 per cent of all assault incidents on licensed premises in this area occurred at hotels, 31 per cent occurred at nightclubs and six per cent occurred at registered clubs. While the majority of assault incidents were at hotels, in comparison with inner Sydney and Newcastle, a greater percentage of assault incidents in Wollongong occurred at nightclubs. This is probably due to the fact that a larger percentage of licensed premises in Wollongong are nightclubs (6%), than in either inner Sydney (3%) or Newcastle (0.8%). Six licensed premises in Wollongong recorded 10 or more on-premises assault incidents between July 1998 and June 2000. These six licensed premises (6%) accounted for 132 assault incidents reported to police or 67 per cent of all assault incidents on licensed premises in Wollongong.<sup>20</sup>

Note: n equals the total number of premises in Wollongong issued this licence type  
 \* Includes all off-licences, on-licences for motels, public halls, universities, colleges, vessels and functions, and governor's licences.

**Figure 9: Number of assault incidents on licensed premises in Wollongong by time, July 1998-June 2000**

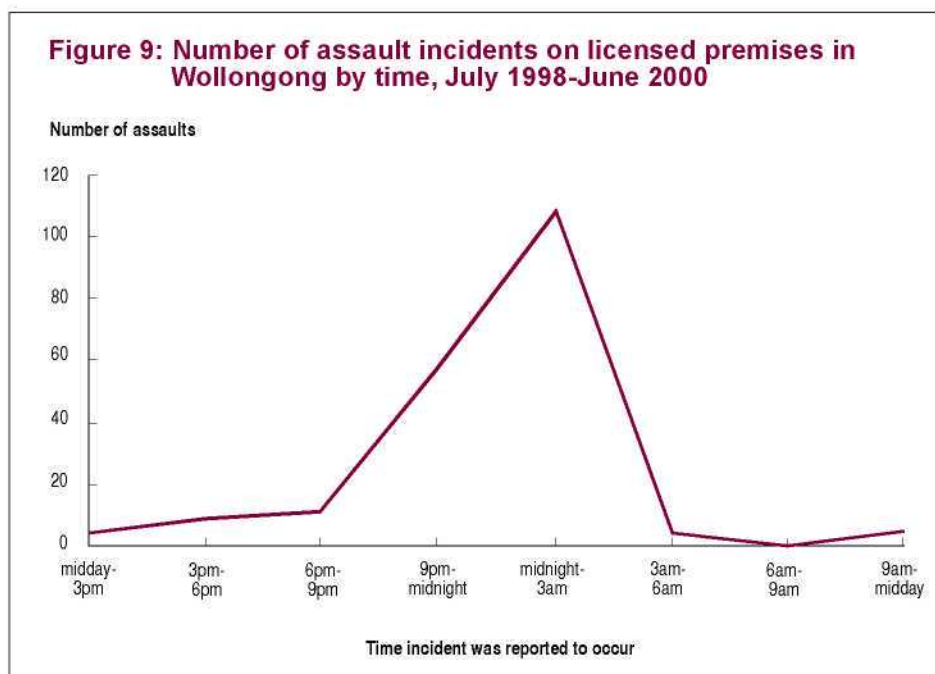


Figure 9 and Figure 10 present the total number of assault incidents on licensed premises in Wollongong by the time of day (Figure 9) and day of week (Figure 10) the incident was reported to occur. The top five three-hour time periods for assault incidents on licensed premises

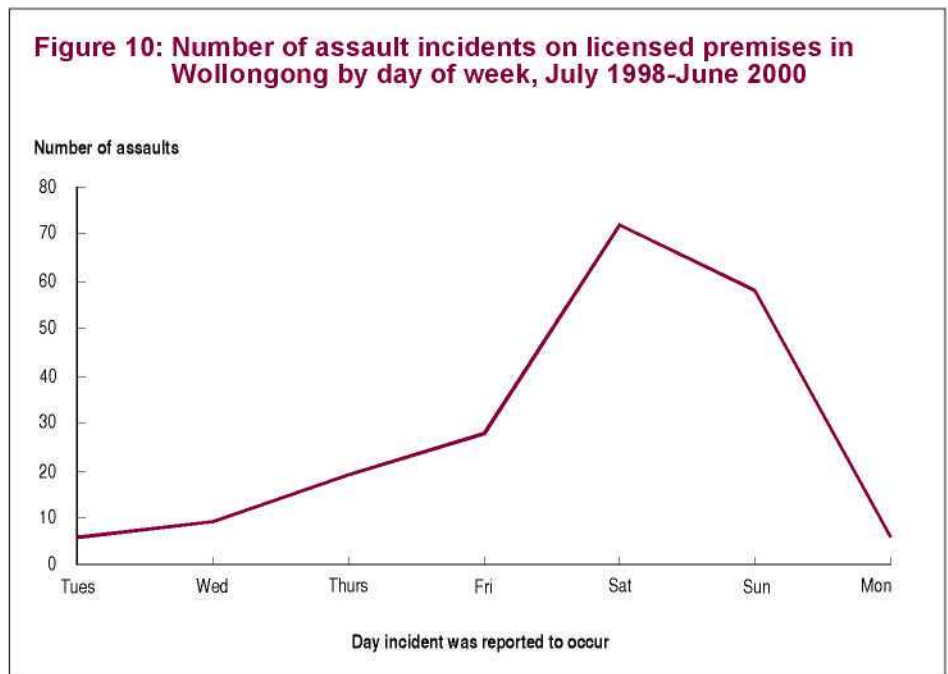
in Wollongong are also shown in Table 9, with these five time periods accounting for almost two-thirds of all assaults on licensed premises in this area. Once again, the majority of assaults on licensed premises in Wollongong occurred between midnight and 3am, on Saturday and Sundays. However, the most frequent times for assaults on licensed premises in Wollongong differed from inner Sydney and Newcastle in an important way. From Figure 9 it can be seen that only a small number of assault incidents in Wollongong (2%) occurred between 3am and 6am. In fact, 83 per cent of all assault incidents on licensed premises in Wollongong occurred within the six-hour time period of 9pm to 3am. In comparison, the inner Sydney area recorded 223 (19%) assault incidents on licensed premises between 3am and 6am, and Newcastle recorded 69 (23%) assault incidents during this same time period.

One likely reason for this difference is that fewer hotels located in Wollongong have authorisation to trade later than 3am. Only two of the eleven hotels (18%) in Wollongong can trade after 3am Monday through Saturday and no hotels are authorised to trade after midnight on a Sunday. On the other hand, Newcastle has 19 hotels (61%) with 24-hour trading Monday to Saturday, while inner Sydney has 53 hotels (23%) with 24-hour trading Monday to Saturday and 73 hotels (32%) with 24-hour trading everyday.<sup>21</sup> While it is unclear from the present analysis whether the extended trading hours of licensed premises in Newcastle and inner Sydney contribute to a greater number of assaults, there does appear to be a pronounced shift in the timing of assault incidents on licensed premises in areas that have fewer late-trading venues. This temporal shift is best illustrated by Figure 11 which shows the percentage of assaults on licensed premises in inner Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong by the time of day the incident was reported to occur. As described previously, in all three areas assault incidents on licensed premises peaked between midnight and 3am. Prior to this peak time period a greater percentage of assault incidents were recorded on Wollongong licensed

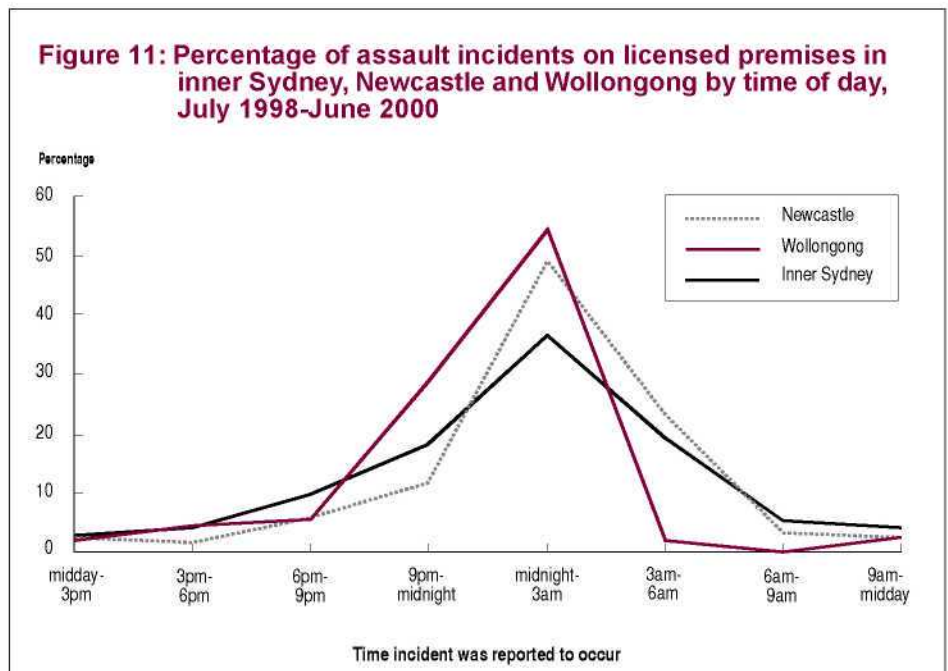
**Table 9: Top 5 three-hour time periods (day & time) for assault incidents on licensed premises in Wollongong, July 1998-June 2000**

Day, time	No. assault incidents	% total assault incidents on licensed premises
Saturday, 12am-3am	46	23.2
Sunday, 12am-3am	36	18.2
Saturday, 9pm-12am	19	9.6
Sunday, 9pm-12am	15	7.6
Friday, 12am-3am	11	5.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>64.1</b>

**Figure 10: Number of assault incidents on licensed premises in Wollongong by day of week, July 1998-June 2000**



**Figure 11: Percentage of assault incidents on licensed premises in inner Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong by time of day, July 1998-June 2000**





premises between 9pm and midnight than on licensed premises in inner Sydney or the Newcastle area. The converse is true after the peak time period, with the number of assault incidents recorded on licensed premises remaining relatively high in inner Sydney and Newcastle but substantially decreasing in Wollongong. This finding has important implications for the targeting of interventions or law enforcement resources to high-risk time periods.

## DISCUSSION

The findings from these analyses provide further evidence that a minority of licensed premises in particular inner-urban areas account for the vast majority of on-premises assaults. In inner Sydney, 12 per cent of hotels accounted for almost 60 per cent of all assaults on hotel premises and just three per cent of hotels accounted for over one-quarter of all assaults on hotel premises. Similarly, in Newcastle eight per cent of licensed premises accounted for nearly 80 per cent of all on-premises assaults and in Wollongong six per cent of licensed premises accounted for 67 per cent of all on-premises assaults. Given this, the issue of what factors distinguish the more from the less problematic premises is paramount in terms of planning effective interventions and/or enforcement practices to minimise alcohol-related harm. Two characteristics of problematic licensed premises which emerge from the present study are that they are more likely to be hotels than any other type of licensed premises and that they are more likely to have extended trading beyond standard hours. While identifying all the reasons for the increase in violent incidents in hotels with extended trading hours is beyond the scope of the present study, evidence from other research suggests an important factor is the increased levels of alcohol consumption in the later trading venues (Chikritzhs, Stockwell & Masters 1997). We also found that several licensed premises which were hotels and had 24-hour or extended trading, did not have repeat assaults on their premises. This suggests that other factors also

contribute to the risk of violent incidents on licensed premises.

Assaults on licensed premises in inner-urban areas were not evenly distributed across time but were concentrated late at night or early in the morning and on weekends. Important differences between the inner Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong areas are also highlighted by the present results. In the relatively smaller urban centres of Newcastle and Wollongong, assault incidents on licensed premises were even more concentrated late at night during weekends than assault incidents on licensed premises in inner Sydney. Only five three-hour time periods accounted for over two-thirds of all on-premises assaults in both Newcastle and Wollongong, while an equivalent proportion of assaults on licensed premises in inner Sydney were distributed over ten high-risk time periods. Furthermore, a comparison of the times when on-premises assaults occurred in Wollongong with those occurring in the other two areas revealed a shift in the timing of assaults to coincide with the later closing times of licensed premises in inner Sydney and Newcastle.

When considering the above evidence, several limitations of the current study should be kept in mind. Firstly, the use of recorded crime data to estimate the problems associated with licensed premises fails to take into account unreported assaults. Other research has shown that up to 70 per cent of victims of alcohol-related physical abuse do not report the incident to police (Bryant & Williams 2000). Similarly, Tomsen, Homel and Thommeny (1991) found that of 32 assaults witnessed on Sydney licensed premises only three cases resulted in the police being called. In the current analysis, however, the number of assault incidents is used as an indicator of the problems associated with a particular venue rather than a measure of the absolute number of violent incidents occurring at any one place. This means that although the overall rate of assaults on problematic premises would appear relatively low in light of the number of people visiting these venues, the figures presented here are likely to underestimate the actual

amount of violence occurring at these establishments.

Secondly, although some problematic licensed premises recorded numerous assaults during the two-year study period, this does not necessarily mean that these places present a high victimisation risk. To estimate the risk of assault victimisation at these venues, the number of potential victims would also need to be taken into account. Since a large number of people would be visiting the licensed premises included in the current study, the risk of assault for each patron would seem relatively low. This having been said, the risk of assault would arguably be much higher for patrons of licensed premises than for those persons who do not visit licensed premises at all. Evidence from the 1998 National Crime and Safety survey shows that 12 per cent of all assault victims (approximately 80,000 persons) report that the most recent assault incident occurred at a pub/club and for males victims alone, 18 per cent (just over 60,000 persons) report being assaulted at pubs/clubs (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1999). Furthermore, the relatively large volume of assault offences on licensed premises in inner Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong in comparison with other areas should make them the focus of crime prevention and law enforcement strategies.

Finally, the results from the current investigation are necessarily limited to the inner-urban areas of large cities such as Sydney and smaller cities such as Newcastle and Wollongong, where a large transient population frequents entertainment precincts particularly on weekends. Different factors related to repeat problems on licensed premises in suburban and rural areas, such as the smaller outlet density and the less transient nature of the service population of those areas, would necessarily need to be addressed. Investigations of repeat victimisation on licensed premises in such areas are currently in the planning phase.

In addition to the two characteristics of repeat-assault premises identified by the current study, namely licence type and 24-hour/extended trading, observational studies of licensed premises have also identified a number of other risk factors

for alcohol-related problems. One of these factors is that particular licensed premises attract certain groups of people who may be more prone to becoming violent when intoxicated (Homel & Clark 1994; Tomsen, Homel & Thommeny 1991; Graham, LaRoque, Yetman, Ross & Guistra 1980). Indeed, the gender profile of offenders and victims described here would suggest that venues which attract younger people and, in particular, younger males would be at a higher risk of repeat assault incidents on their premises. However, since this characteristic is likely to be a feature of many hotels in the State, the utility of this variable as a source of leverage on alcohol-related violence may be limited. Other factors which have been identified in the research literature as being associated with alcohol-related problems on licensed premises are more specific to the drinking venue. These include social and physical aspects of licensed premises such as low comfort, high boredom, aggressive bouncers, discounted drinks (Homel, Tomsen & Thommeny 1992), poor ventilation, lack of cleanliness, a hostile atmosphere (Graham et al. 1980), overcrowding and inadequate numbers of bar staff (Homel & Clark 1994). It is acknowledged that alcohol-related aggression involves multiple contributing factors that are related to both the effect of alcohol on an individual's behaviour and the situational context in which the incident occurs. However, predictive factors which are more specific to the drinking venues offer considerable potential to reduce violence on licensed premises because they are under the control of management and are relatively easy to regulate.

One venue-specific factor consistently found to be associated with harm on licensed premises is bar staff continuing to serve obviously intoxicated customers (Graham et al. 1980; Homel & Clark, 1994; Homel et al. 1992; Lang, Stockwell, Rydon & Lockwood 1995; Stockwell, Lang & Rydon 1993). A concern for bar staff in refusing alcohol to already intoxicated patrons is that it may lead to violent confrontations with hostile customers (Lang, Stockwell, Rydon & Beel 1998). However, the enforcement of laws against serving

customers who are intoxicated receives a significant amount of public support in Australia. Results from the 1998 National Drug Strategy Household survey (NDHS) show that of the 10,000 Australians aged 14 or over interviewed, 82 per cent of males and 90 per cent of females supported stricter enforcement of laws against serving people who are drunk. Although support for this policy option generally increased with age, 71 per cent of males aged 20-29, the group who are most likely to be perpetrators of alcohol-related violence, supported stricter enforcement of responsible service legislation (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 1999).

Provisions contained in both the NSW Liquor Act (1982) and the NSW Registered Clubs Act (1976) prohibit the presence and serving of intoxicated persons on licensed premises. The importance of these responsible service provisions were more recently highlighted by the inclusion of liquor harm minimisation as the primary objectives of these liquor laws. This has almost certainly led to a greater awareness of the responsibilities of management to minimise the harm associated with alcohol. For example, in an interview study of 311 licensees/managers in the Hunter area conducted in 1996, Wiggers, Considine, Daly and Hazell (2000) found that two-thirds of these premises reported that they had in place a responsible service of alcohol policy and associated training of bar staff. Of the one-third who did not, a further 80-85 per cent reported that they were interested in adopting such initiatives. However, other research suggests that the existence of responsible service laws and policies alone do not lead to sustained improvements in the serving practices of bar staff. These studies have demonstrated that pseudo-drunk patrons feigning severe intoxication are almost always successful in obtaining another drink from licensed premises despite liquor laws forbidding the service of alcohol to persons who are intoxicated (Andréasson, Lindewald & Rehnman 2000; Rydon, Stockwell, Lang & Beel 1996).

Determining the optimal mix of educational/knowledge-based and

enforcement-based initiatives to reduce persistent levels of alcohol-related problems, such as on-premises assaults, remains a significant challenge for this area of public policy. In a survey of 289 police officers in the Hunter and Northern Sydney police regions, Smith, Wiggers, Considine, Daly and Collins (2001) found that while 67 per cent of these officers responded that education of licensees would be more effective than enforcement for promoting compliance with the NSW Liquor Act (1982), 87 per cent also responded that it is important for police to enforce the responsible service provisions of the Act. Further, 93 per cent of officers responded that those serving alcohol should be made responsible for preventing intoxication of patrons and 83 per cent believed that there were insufficient police resources allocated to enforcement.

Some evidence for the role of proactive enforcement strategies in reducing alcohol-related harm associated with specific premises comes from an evaluation of a police enforcement initiative in Washtenaw County, Michigan (McKnight & Streff 1994). This initiative involved at least 10 hours of enforcement activity per week over a 12-month period during 1990-1991. Overall, 13 citations were issued over this period and 11 warnings. Although the number of citations and warnings were relatively small in number, the percentage of pseudo-drunk patrons who were refused alcohol increased from 18 per cent at base-line to 54 per cent at 3-month follow-up (though this fell to 41% by 12-month follow-up). While a similar though much smaller pattern of service refusal was observed in one of the three control counties, only the experimental county experienced a marked reduction in the number of persons arrested for drink-driving (from 32% to 23% attributed to licensed premises).

In order to plan possible enforcement initiatives in Australia, it is important that the current extent of enforcement practice be understood. To date, however, there has been a deficiency in data which quantifies the extent to which responsible service legislation is actually being complied with and the

level of enforcement which ensues when such legal provisions are breached. To this end, the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research in conjunction with the National Drug Research Institute has obtained further funding from NSW Health to undertake a comprehensive descriptive analysis of patterns of enforcement action on licensed premises in NSW. This study will utilise both police and Licensing Court data to quantify the prevalence of recorded breaches of the Liquor Act, the types of sanctions imposed and the extent of repeat offending by higher risk premises. Future bulletins in this series will present the results of this research.

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## NOTES

- 1 15 assaults at licensed restaurants and 1 assault at a hotel were recorded in COPS as occurring on a commercial/ retail premises rather than a licensed premises. A further 42 assaults reported to occur at the casino were recorded in COPS as occurring on a recreation premises rather than a licensed premises. These 58 incidents were also included in the current analysis.
- 2 When attempting to identify the name of the licensed premises for each assault incident it became evident that police had sometimes allocated different postcodes for assault incidents which had occurred on the same licensed premises. Discrepancies between postcodes and premises names most frequently occurred for those venues that were located near or on postcode boundaries. Therefore, assault data for the surrounding suburbs (i.e. postcodes 2008, 2016, 2021, 2037) were extracted to ensure that all assaults on the licensed premises falling within the specified boundary were identified.
- 3 The geographical area, beginning at Blackwattle Bay, was bounded by Wattle St and Abercrombie St to the West, Cleveland St to the South and South Dowling St, Barcom Ave and Waratah St to the East, ending at Rushcutters Bay Park.
- 4 Data obtained from NSW Department of Gaming and Racing on 22 November 2000.
- 5 Of a total 1,284 incidents extracted from the COPS database for the postcodes 2000, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2016, 2021 and 2037, 7 per cent could not be identified from the *property name* or street address fields and thus, narratives were obtained for these incidents.
- 6 131 incidents were excluded from the analysis, including 103 incidents which occurred on licensed premises that were not located in the defined area, 24 incidents at venues that were not licensed and 4 outdoor incidents. Fifteen incidents were on licensed premises in the defined area but the premises name could not be identified from the COPS data or the police narratives and were thus classified as 'unknown'. This unknown category included 8 assault incidents where the name of a licensed premises was recorded by police but could not be identified from the Gaming and Racing database and 7 assault incidents in which the police and/or the victim did not know the name of the licensed premises where the assault had occurred.

- 7 The time period is based upon the date that each incident was reported to police. Of the 1,153 incidents of assault on licensed premises, 99.4 per cent were recorded as having actually occurred during the period July 1998 through June 2000. The 7 incidents recorded as having occurred outside the reporting period could have been incidents that were reported sometime after the event occurred or alternatively administrative errors. Given the small percentage of incidents recorded as having occurred outside the reporting period (0.6%) the degree of bias to prevalence estimates would be negligible. Therefore all incidents extracted over this reporting period are included in the analysis.
- 8 Four three-hour time periods recorded 27 assault incidents. Only one of them, Friday 6pm-9pm, was included here because it had more assaults flagged as alcohol-related than the other three time periods.
- 9  $\chi^2=85.5$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p<0.01$ . This analysis was conducted using data from Briscoe and Donnelly (2001).
- 10 For assault incidents with multiple victims or offenders the average age of all the victims or all the offenders is included here.
- 11 It should be noted that Figure 3 includes only assaults occurring in postcodes 2000, 2007, 2009, 2010 and 2011 between July 1999 and June 2000. Assaults on licensed premises that were included in previous analyses that did not fall into one of these five postcodes or during this one-year period are not reported here. Premises which are categorised as 'other' include assaults on commercial, law enforcement, education and public transport premises types as well as a generic 'other' category which police can nominate on the COPS database. Assault incidents classified as 'Shoot with intent other than to murder' are excluded from this figure due to the relatively small number of offences involved. This analysis was conducted using data from Briscoe and Donnelly (2001).
- 12  $\chi^2=88.1$ ,  $df=6$ ,  $p<0.01$ .
- 13 It should be noted that 22 hotels were classified as dormant by the NSW Department of Gaming and Racing as at November 2000. Dormant hotel licences are ones that are not fully operational. This can be due either to the closure/ renovations of an existing hotel or to a new licence issued for a hotel that has not yet paid its full licence fee. Since some of these dormant hotels may still have been operating during part of the study period all 22 were included in the analysis.

- 14 Information on extended trading hours for hotels was provided by the NSW Department of Gaming and Racing and was current at the end of November 2000. Standard trading hours for a hotel are 5am-12am, Monday-Saturday and 10am-10pm, on Sundays. The 'extended' category includes hotels who had been granted an extension to their trading hours but did not have authorisation to trade on a 24-hour basis, 7 days a week.
- 15 Although the licensed premises classified as 24-hours have been given authorisation to trade 24-hours a day, 7 days a week, it is possible that these venues may not be trading all the time. However, it is likely that these hotels trade much later than any other venues, particularly on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights which are peak times for assaults on licensed premises.
- 16 A total of 296 assault incidents were recorded on licensed premises in Newcastle. Three of these incidents occurred at venues that were not licensed and one incident occurred at a venue found to be located in postcode 2296. These 4 incidents were excluded from the analysis. Another 2 assaults at hotels and 1 assault at a licensed restaurant were recorded in COPS as occurring on commercial/retail premises. These 3 incidents were included in the analysis.
- 17 Only one licensed premises in the Newcastle area can be classified according to its licence type as a nightclub. To avoid singling out the identity of this particular venue, any assaults occurring at this nightclub were combined with those occurring at hotels.
- 18 Two hotels in the Newcastle area, which were classified as dormant by the NSW Department of Gaming and Racing as at November 2000, were included in the analysis.
- 19 A total of 198 assault incidents were recorded on licensed premises in Wollongong. One of these incidents occurred at a restaurant that was not licensed and was therefore excluded from the analysis. One other assault incident at a licensed restaurant which was recorded in COPS as occurring on commercial/retail premises was included in the analysis.
- 20 One hotel and one bottleshop in Wollongong were classified as dormant by the NSW Department of Gaming and Racing as at November 2000. These two licensed premises were included in the analysis.
- 21 In all metropolitan areas nightclubs typically are unable to trade after 3am Monday to Saturday or after midnight on Sundays as a condition of their licence (although nightclubs in the City of Sydney, as well as those in particular areas of Kings Cross and Darlinghurst do have Sunday trading until 3am the following day). The NSW Department of Gaming and Racing have also advised us that some nightclubs are able to trade after 3am if they had previously been granted extended trading before the introduction of a separate nightclub licence in 1996. This exception appears to be relevant only to inner Sydney nightclubs and the nightclub in Newcastle (personal communication 13 September 2001) and therefore does not affect the present conclusions. Registered clubs are able to trade 24-hours a day but many do not remain open for extended trading and only account for a small percentage of all assaults on licensed premises in the three inner-urban areas examined.