

Thank you Mr Chair

Hi I'm Zeah. I grew up in Kyogle and moved to Sydney to attend University.

There is a serious issue in many parts of NSW with young people being on the streets at night – and they sometimes use alcohol and sometimes misuse it, resulting in harm to themselves, their friends and their communities.

At the Young People and Alcohol Forum on Monday, and in the consultations that were undertaken with young people in the lead up to the Forum, young people from across the state said that hanging out on the streets at night was a real problem.

Young people said very clearly that they don't want to be on the streets. They would much rather have somewhere else to be. They don't feel safe on the streets. Unfortunately, they feel even less safe anywhere else.

It has been suggested at this Summit that a solution to this problem is a curfew on young people – I think this is a very important issue, but a curfew is not the right solution.

All of us here acknowledge that our direction and solutions should be evidence based – so let's look at the evidence about curfews

Curfews have been used in the United States for some years, and there is a considerable body of research into them and evaluations of their effectiveness.

The scientific evidence about curfews is that they do not work in reducing youth crime of this sort.

Where curfews have been imposed because numbers of young people are hanging out after dark, they have rarely had any effect on the local crime rate – sometimes crime rates have increased as a result.

Where crime reductions have come after the introduction of a curfew – they have been introduced at the same time as a collection of approaches – like entertainment opportunities, night patrols, support for parents to care for their kids better, affordable accessible transport and so on.

They have been about giving young people the opportunity to do be safe and do something other than hang around on the streets.

As Minister Beamer said earlier, For many kids, home is not safe for them or for other family members – forcibly taking them home – or forcing them to stay at home – means they are more vulnerable to harm, and more likely to be involved in crimes, as perpetrators or victims, than they are if they stay on the streets.

Curfews also create other problems – they worsen the relationship between young people and the police, between young people and their families, between young people and local government – in fact between young people and all the structures in society that we need them to have good relationships with.

Curfews have been demonstrated to increase local tensions, and not to solve the problem they are designed to solve.

I believe the Summit should be guided by the evidence and reject any call for curfews. Rather we should be guided by the resolutions from the young people and alcohol forum – for measures that the evidence suggests will work like:

- Entertainment and recreational activities that are alcohol free, are affordable and have transport to and from
- Support for parents, families and schools to help them raise young people better
- Better, constructive relationships between young people and local police
- Increased young people friendly services

These are the right solutions to the right problem

Curfews for Young People in NSW:

Curfews compromise the fundamental rights of the child and are a form of age discrimination. The freedom of assembly and movement is a right guaranteed to young people under Article 5 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Young People have expressed solutions to the issue of keeping young people safe at night such as night buses which take young people home, no questions asked, safe under 18's alcohol free events- especially in country areas and