



# Draft Newcastle After Dark Strategy: 2018-2022

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Newcastle City Council

May 2018

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## Introduction

The Hunter Business Chamber is the largest regional business chamber in Australia and was established in 1886. The Chamber independently represents around 2,000 member organisations to all levels of government and is the peak industry association in the region, reflecting the interests of all business sectors.

The Hunter Business Chamber works as an integral part of the NSW Business Chamber network and represents business at local, state and federal level to advocate for an improved operational climate for businesses in this region.

Newcastle, as the second largest city of NSW and the capital of the Hunter, has the ability to be a world-class city, given its coastal location and access to infrastructure. It is home to world-class health, research and education facilities as well as a range of complementary and emerging industries such as renewable energy technologies, the defence industry, tourism and the digital economy.

## Key Points

The Hunter Business Chamber welcomes Council's Newcastle After Dark Strategy in response to the challenges of providing the necessary amenity, infrastructure and operational environment that is needed for Newcastle to be able to deliver a vibrant, productive and safe night time economy.

As a consequence of the current revitalisation and development boom the city is experiencing, Newcastle and the region are attracting significant attention and interest. With this comes an expectation of what the city has to offer, and the night time economy and its infrastructure become vitally important. If the city is to continue along its growth pathway, its infrastructure, facilities and amenity must not fall short on expectations otherwise we risk the disappointment and disinvestment that comes with over promising and under delivering.

We broadly support the six strategic priority areas identified in the Strategy, acknowledging the partnerships and collaboration that will be required with other agencies and organisations in delivering a series of actions under these priorities.

### 12.2 Diverse Venues and Spaces

Diversity in venues and spaces includes the opening times and licensing restrictions on those venues.

Newcastle's landscape has changed significantly over the past ten years since the Independent Liquor and Gaming Authority (ILGA) implemented new lockout and licensing restrictions to venues in the area.

It is time to acknowledge that some of these restrictions are no longer required or could potentially have some changes implemented to improve the offering of these venues and increase choices for patrons.

The Chamber encourages consideration be given to changes to liquor licence conditions that recognise those businesses who are doing the right thing and demonstrating good practice.

The Horton Report suggests a case for permitting the sale and supply of spirits and cocktails after 10pm and until midnight. It further suggests a case-by-case basis for varying the cessation period for the service of alcohol. The City has shrunk from 14 to 4 hotels with late night operation and not all these function on a weekend, yet we are striving to attract growing numbers of visitors to the city centre.

The City risks not being able to realise its ambition given the expectations that come with broadening the visitor economy and tourism.

The Chamber supports those initiatives aimed at improving economic conditions for venues in the CBD and providing greater choice and ease of access for visitors.

#### **12.4 Live Music and Performance**

The Chamber supports Council's intent to implement a range of initiatives aimed at improving the offering of live music across the City and surrounding precincts.

Newcastle has long had a vibrant and diverse live music offering and this should continue. Developing a framework for this through the establishment of a Live Music Roundtable and Taskforce is a positive first step.

Live music and performance is an important cultural piece that attracts visitors to a city and can create a real tourism drawcard. These short and long term initiatives in the Strategy can be built on to encourage this and we look forward to seeing the detail behind this piece.

#### **12.6 Transport and Wayfinding**

It is crucial that residents and visitors are able to find their way around the City at night-time if we are to grow the night-time economy.

We welcome the implementation of night-time wayfinding in the short term and would encourage strong promotion of this. Transport options need to provide flexibility and access to surrounding precincts in a timely and safe manner if we want to improve and grow the night-time economy.

#### **12.7 Streetscape and Lighting**

Streetscape and lighting is critical to encouraging and promoting activated public spaces in the City and providing a safer environment.

Visitors will be deterred from walking and exploring a city if lighting is poor and the streetscape is uninviting. Initiatives that can be implemented more quickly than a two to four year time frame would help to improve the image of the City and can start to promote it as an exciting and inviting place to visit.

The diversity of the night-time economy will be dependent on attracting a diverse range of visitors including not only young people but older people or families with young children. They need to be able to come into the City and feel safe about walking around or using transport if we would like to see more activation as well as use of venues and spaces.

## 12.10 Promotion and Marketing

Effective promotion and marketing of what is available to do and see around the City at any given time will have significant impact on the numbers of people accessing these activities, events or spaces.

Providing real-time promotional information on city screens, projections and push notifications is an effective method to provide up to date information to a wide range of people. This will help to create the understanding that there is a lot happening in the City with a lot of diversity for people to choose from. This should also include social media channels or app access.

The Draft Newcastle After Dark Strategy is a good foundation for implementing actions and initiatives that will help breath life back into the City and provide the right environment and amenity for a thriving night-time economy.

The Chamber appreciates the opportunity to provide these comments on the Strategy and would welcome any further engagement around this matter.

### Contact

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