**APPENDIX 1 – VERBATIM COMMENTS**

**Loyalty Square, Balmain - Establishing an alcohol-free zone in this local square**

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| **Online comments** |
| I am the owner and operator of Balmain Community Pharmacy- the pharmacy directly across the road/foot crossing at Loyalty Square. The disruptive, anti-social behavior is out of control and is negatively impacting the community. We observe daily drunken and often frightening behavior, and often we find the inebriated people come across the road and try to steal from our pharmacy. I have a responsibility to keep my staff safe and this environment is making staff frightened, as well and driving potential customers away. We have witnessed screaming and shouting, as well as physical altercations and its time the council step up and allow the community to take back this important local social area. |
| It's like the heart of Balmain and should feel vibrant and safe especially for youth to walk through at night. It needs to be better lit too. |
| I also request it be a no-smoking zone. It is a high foot traffic area at the intersection of two pedestrian crossings and the front entrance to Woolworths. In what could be a lovely space for residents, it is no longer, as we run the gauntlet of smoking, urinating, inebriated people that have no care for themselves, others or their surroundings, leaving litter on the ground, abusing people walking past etc, but we should not just ban them.  They clearly are needing social help - it's a slightly different group each day, with about 10 regulars. At least one has young (pre teen) children with them occasionally.  If the ban comes into place it will be ignored, unless enforced. Enforcement will probably just move them to Gladstone Park or near another a bottle shop. Liquor licensees need to be engaged with to avoid serving them and their proxys (as I have heard them asking passers by to purchase alcohol for them in breach of RSA laws) as they clearly have alcohol abuse issues. |
| Nothing but crime and abuse and harrassing strangers since people have begun drinking outside woolworths |
| I have lived in Balmain for a number of years and love the fact that outside of Woolworths is a fantastic community meeting space in the heart of Balmain (it has been for years). There are many characters who meet there regularly and it’s a great place for us all to have a chat. The problem I and others have is that when alcohol is introduced into the meeting place, violence commences. People become aggressive and passers-by become frightened and avoid that place. It becomes an unsafe area for us all. Lately there have also been a number police and ambulances called there. I love that fact that people can meet for a yarn and to connect, but have seen this meeting place decline over that past few years into an unsafe area with the introduction of alcohol. This is sad as it’s the heart of Balmain. I support having an Alcohol Free Zone declared at Loyalty Square. This way people can still meet, and hopefully it creates a safe place for our community to meet again. |
| Can you please also make it a smoke free zone. Most times it smells like a tobacco factory and the area in front of the seating is always littered with cigarette buds. It is quite disgusting! Not to mention, that most people that use it leave their empty can/bottles there. Would you also make sure that the garden bed in front of Woolworths is beautified. I have been asking this for three years now. Thank you and regards |
| This area is both an access point for a supermarket and the main high street, as well as a war memorial. Public consumption of alcohol at scale is not a suitable use for this space, given all types of pedestrian traffic from young children to vulnerable elderly need to access the location without intimidation. |
| I live less than 100 m from the Loyalty Square. The place has been a filthy unsafe area full of antisocial elements who drink alcohol, do drugs, scream, fight between each other, urinate to the Woolworth property and properties nearby including ours, sometimes even poop to the concrete. They constantly harassing and demanding money to the shop visitors and people passing by, in a rude and aggressive manner. Police is often involved, I talked to them, they only interfere when there is a physical fight (maybe once a week or so), anything else is not their concern. They recommended to go to the Council and complain. I also strongly believe those people make a bad example of what the young generation need to do to live happily in Balmain - drink, never work, demand money from others. Which is opposite to what the families of Balmain residents try to teach children. Please make this area drag and alcohol free and get more monitoring of this area cleanliness. Thank you! |
| The area outside Woolworths has become very disfunctional . I observe a lot of people gathering ,excessive drinking and aggressive loud antisocial behaviour. I notice the rubbish is growing. |
| I support this proposal only because it is a high traffic zone.  But making one area alcohol free does not address the root causes.  Will the people currently using Loyalty Sq to drink alcohol and exhibit anti social behaviour move on to another place?  Is this behaviour okay if it can’t be seen by so many people?  How will this be policed?  Wouldn’t the council’s time be better spent addressing the root causes of why& how people are sitting in Loyalty Sq drinking alcohol for long periods of time & displaying antisocial behaviour?  The council has allowed alcohol back at NYE along the foreshore with plenty of antisocial behaviour including urinating in the streets smashed glass in parks/streets and overflowing street bins. This occurs despite a high police presence.  Why is one situation accepted and the other not? |
| This square has been taken over by unsavoury people Leaving a dirty mess behind them And a smell of urine |
| I strongly support an alcohol free zone at Loyalty Square Balmain. I often walk past there with my baby in the pram and the smell of alcohol and cigarettes is terrible, and the anti-social behaviour is very unpleasant, and at times I have felt unsafe walking past, when we’ve witnessed violent behaviour.  This behaviour should not be tolerated by the community. |
| It is unsafe to walk into Woolworths alone as a single female, they are threatening, violent and intimidating. I live by myself very close to Loyalty Square and I shop very frequently at Woolworths. I have felt unsafe on many occasions while walking past people sitting outside the supermarket as I could see they were drinking and behaving in a way that showed that they were probably not sober.I have noticed mothers and children avoiding walking past people drinking and behaving in an antisocial manner. Please make Loyalty Square alcohol free to keep us all safer. |
| I've been verbally abused more than once, and feel threatened by alchol/drug affected men and women sitting outside Woolworths at Loyalty Square. Plus the area is so often filthy and stinking of urine.  Maybe it should be also investigated as to who is supplying the alcohol to these constantly drunk individuals! |
| Our family does not feel safe walking through Loyalty Square. Alcohol is fuelling the aggression, which is also impacting the young children of the people consuming the alcohol. We also need more police presence, and CCTV. Council should take action before someone is seriously harmed. |
| As a resident in Balmain I often see misuse and abuse of alcohol at loyalty square. It would be good to try to prevent this. |
| We live right next to the Woolworths. My wife does not feel safe to walk past that corner when the drunk people are they. They have tried to engage in conversation with her or comment on our newborn baby which makes us all feel uncomfortable as we have seen some of them become aggressive or start shouting at people. If we expect they'll be there we often choose to walk back streets in the area rather than go past that corner.  It feels both unsafe, and also wholly inappropriate for these groups of drunk people to be hanging around there all the time. We are so glad this proposal was brought forward as we strongly feel this should be an alcohol free zone |
| I have young children and have lived in the area for 12 years. I have observed the increasingly hostile behavior around the square and numerous incidents during broad daylight that have frightened my children and community. I am hopeful we can return the square to the safe meeting place it was previously. |
| I am a local resident with two toddlers (3 and 5) that lives, just around the corner. We walk past this area on a daily basis, and regularly witness inappropriate behavior from the people that drink on the seats, swearing, public fighting, music, spitting... It's an absolute disgrace and disruptive to a peaceful community. My children do not feel safe walking through the area and have expressed this to me, I don't want to walk past that area and my wife also has raised concern... It's just not acceptable and something needs to be done ASAP. |
| This is way overdue , this area is not safe for residents or children. The housing commission drunks (and yes it is confirmed they are from the housing commission) need to be kicked out of Balmain. |
| I strongly support an alcohol-free zone. I frequent this section of Darling Street shopping village almost daily and will be glad to see the anti-social behaviour behaviour I frequently witness, curbed at this location. I have two small children and the swearing, drinking, loitering, littering is offensive. As a community, we should be promoting shopping and eating along Darling Street to residents and visitors, which is hard to do when you are confronted by such unwelcome behaviour. Thank you for this initiative. |
| This is puritanical nonsense. Alcohol is a legal product and adults should be able to consume it at their leisure at places of their choosing. We don't need a local council telling us what to do. |
| you need a new public space plan for this area  antisocial behaviour is abysmal. Made worse by how space laid out with the benches screened somewhat from the memorial/main thoroughfare and Woolworths entrance creating and under utilised area of not great amenity except for drunks given it’s equidistant between getting goon from the bottle-o, cig goes from the illegal tabocco smuggler on darling street and snacks from Woolies.  you should:  1) ban alcohol in this area (noting it will migrate elsewhere probably), extending it up darling street so that eg the bus shelter at Gladstone doesn’t become a cess pit might be prudent.  2) draw up a darling st masterplan that picks up the key precincts of a) heritage precinct up round town hall and library etc b) loyalty sq, making it easier for Woolworths and the owners to redevelop so they can open up the frontage and activate that space. C) Gladstone park and the dining strip there. This will be easy – I’ll write it for you if you want. |
| Everyday there are drunk people at Loyalty Square. They are often abusive to passers by, and always leave bottles, cigarette butts, food and other litter behind.  These people need to be discouraged for the sake of the overall community.  I also worry about the safety and security of the dogs left while people shop in Woolies. |
| Not only is this where our Anzacs are locally honoured, but it is also central to the local shopping area where many families, children, elderly and other residents frequent.  Given the alcohol related abuse of locals in this area and the significance of Loyalty Square, making this area an alcohol free zone feels like an overdue and necessary step for the area. |
| The abhorrent and vile behaviour out front of Woolworths has gone on too long. As a mother of a small child (5yrs old) I am fearful of the area - even in broad daylight. The drinking, drunk arguments, aggressive yelling and vomiting are awful and scary. It’s an embarrassment to our suburb. |
| I would like to see an Alcohol-Free Zone created around the precinct of Loyalty Square to help prevent alcohol-related anti-social behavior. I have witnessed many occurrences of anti-social behavior over many periods of the day. I would like for an Alcohol-Free Zone to be implemented to allow this area to be properly managed. This is a busy thoroughfare used by people of all ages and it is not acceptable for people going about their daily routines to feel threatened, intimidated - especially children and older citizens. The square is a place of respect to military, and this is not how it should be treated. In addition, the area is always littered with alcoholic containers, with cigarette buts, and it is general dirty and it smells. The seating should be able to be used for the purpose for which it was intended such as peaceful rest, for the older generation, or to wait to meet family and friends.  The Alcohol-Free Zone should be established for the maximum period of four years. |
| - A threat to public safety  - Can be intimidating for pedestrians  - Creates litter - broken bottles |
| This little pocket of Balmain is getting over run with people who are ruining this central area of Balmain. It’s not a good image for locals or visitors to the area. |
| Children and the elderly are not safe from abuse |
| Loyalty Square has become a scary and unpleasant place to pass through, even during daylight hours. The seats are generally taken over by people drinking, taking drugs, abusing and harassing passers by, playing loud music and publicly urinating. If existing laws do not allow the police to control this type of behaviour, I fully support any additional steps that can be taken to restore this public open space so that the public feel safe walking past it or using it. |
| Completely sick and tired of the antisocial and abusive behaviour from drunk groups having around there every single day. It's threatening and in some instances there have been violent incidents and thefts |
| I support this and decisions to make other areas in the Inner West alcohol free zones. |
| Unfortunately, Loyalty Square is a gathering place for some who consume large amounts of alcohol and then engage in anti-social behaviour, inlcuding verbal and physical abuse of each other as well as members of the general public. This occurs during daylight hours as well as at night. I would definitely support an alcohol-free zone in this area. |
| I strongly support this. But it will be useless if not enforced - but who will enforce it? |
| Generally opposed to alcohol-free zones as a bandaid solution to anti-social behaviour that punishes the majority and enforces an unhealthy drinking culture (responsible drinking in public should be encouraged and educated appropriately). |
| This question is disingenuous! What you are saying is Council supports the vagrant types who sit there and occasionally drink alcohol being forced out. This woke pretense is offensive and dishonest. Council should be trying to help these people not trying to make their lives worse. This is a disgraceful and bourgeois reaction to a social issue. Shame on the Labour Party and Greens Councilors for supporting yet another attempt to sweep social issues under the carpet. |

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| **Email comments** |
| I emailed this 2 days ago because I wanted the council to know about the escalation in verbal abuse and misbehavior. Balmain prides itself as a diverse community and sees itself as a safe community to live in. Last week I actually felt unsafe in the heart of Balmain at 3 pm. I have been watching a noticeable  increase in drinking and verbal abuse by a group of people,  with antisocial behavior , that occupy the benches in front of Woolworths nearly every day. They leave broken bottles , food, cigarette butts and garbage under the benches after they party. I was so fed up that I complained to the Balmain Police. I was the second complaint that day. I spoke to some young men working for the Star Light Foundation, in front of Woolworths today, and they work around the city and they said they haven’t experienced this level of behavior. I even spoke to Woolworth employee and a few days ago someone was kicked and beaten in front of the store.  The police know who most of these people are but have their hands tied unless they commit a crime or become violent which is of course after the fact.  You are aware of this situation and I would like to make a recommendation.  Making it an alcohol free zone is fine but who is going to police this bad behavior? The Police will only do something if the aggression increases.  My suggestion which is cost effective, immediate and will improve the area.   1. Currently there are 8 benches . Its un-necessary to have so many . Leave  only 1 , benches can be added later if behavior improves, next to Woolworths entry. This will eliminate the problem of them congregating in front of Woolworths 2. For safety,  have  Woolworth maintain the inside benches for elderly and children. 3. Replace the 7 benches with potted trees. This will also prevent graffiti on wall. Easy clean up of area and more welcome greening of square. 4. Add security cameras on both corners of Woolworths to monitor area for safety. This way evidence can be obtained easily for antisocial behavior.   Very few people sit in that area due to the threat of verbal abuse, garbage and fear of having to deal with these aggressive people.  Please take action, rather than just a sign, on solving this issue. I have emailed Darcy Bryne, Kobi Shetty and  Michelle Bentley regarding my concerns. Thank you |
| Absolutely should be an alcohol free zone |
| I am a resident of Rozelle and would like to let you know of my support for the proposal that Loyalty Square be made an alcohol free zone.  From time to time, I shop at Woolworths and the surrounding stores and find it quite off putting when people sit in Loyalty Square drinking alcohol, particularly when it results in loud and rude comments and inappropriate behaviour.  There have been times that I have avoided the area altogether due to that behaviour. I am aware that other residents are far more significantly affected by the behavioural issues resulting from the consumption of alcohol by people in that area.  I feel that imposing an alcohol ban in the area would be an appropriate and measured response by Council to address the problems caused by alcohol consumption in Loyalty Square. |
| **Information shared from City of Sydney from Your Ground project** |
| “Bad vibes    While well lit at night, there is a group of intoxicated middle aged men and women that gather here most afternoons and evenings. It is likely due to the hotel across the street. But I always avoid where this group is sitting as I don’t feel safe. I notice most people avoid walking where this group usually sit, even during the day.”    *“*These individuals, whilst mostly keeping to themselves, can occasionally accost members of the public, usually workers inside the Woolworths. These confrontations involve aggressive behaviours and vulgar, violent language, and often leaves me scared for my personal safety.” |

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| **Submission from NSW Police Force Leichhardt Area Command.** |
| Dear Mayor Byrne  **Anti-Social behaviour at Loyalty Square Balmain**  I refer to your correspondence dated 2 November 2023 in relation to a request for additional resources be allocated by Leichhardt Police Area Command to patrol the area of Loyalty Square Balmain. This request is to mitigate anti-social behaviour and reduce residents’ concerns regarding local crime.  Since the beginning of 2022, Leichhardt Police Area Command have observed a substantial increase in alcohol related anti-social activity occurring at the location of Loyalty Square Balmain, most notably around the outdoor seating, along the boundary of Woolworths. Alcohol is a large factor in this anti-social behaviour and Police attendance at this location is now almost a daily occurrence, due to calls from concerned residents. Public complaints have included harassment, public urination and defecation, assaults, and littering. Leichhardt Police Area Command taskings will continue to mitigate anti-social behaviour and reduce crime.  The concentration of anti-social activity at this location in 2022 and 2023 can be seen in the latest map obtained on the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOSCAR) website and is displayed below. This map shows the density of non-domestic assault incidents on the Balmain Peninsula, and Loyalty Square is clearly shown to be a hot spot of violent incidents.  The suburb of Balmain suffers an alcohol related assault rate of 533.5 incidents per 100,000 persons, which is more than the New South Wales average of 414.1 incidents per 100,000 persons (BOSCAR).  Since January 2023, 19 Assaults were reported outside Woolworths at Loyalty Square in Balmain, including reports submitted later to NSW Police. During this same period, there was a total of 73 assaults in the suburb of Balmain, which indicates the area of Loyalty Square accounted for 26% of all assaults in Balmain. Additionally, Leichhardt Police Area Command have responded to 103 Police Radio incidents at Loyalty Square, Balmain. Some of these incident types are detailed below:  1. Check Bona Fides: 63  2. Brawls: 2  3. Assaults: 11 (19 Assaults mentioned above includes assaults submitted later to Police)  4. Intoxicated Persons: 6  5. Person Of Interest / Vehicle of Interest stops: 1  6. Domestic Violence: 2  7. Concern for Welfare: 4  8. Malicious Damage: 1  9. Animal Complaint: 1  Leichhardt Police Area Command supports the proposal by Inner West Council to establish an Alcohol-Free Zone at Loyalty Square, Balmain. This would assist the Command in ensuring community safety by minimising harm associated with the misuse and abuse of liquor, including injury and damage arising from violence and other incidents of anti-social behaviour. The establishment of an Alcohol-Free Zone for Loyalty Square, Balmain would provide Police with sufficient tools to disrupt and prevent on-going issues at this location.  To further support this proposal, Leichhardt Police Area Command request that Inner West Council consider the proposal of establishing a CCTV camera system at Loyalty Square, Balmain to also capture the area of the Balmain War Memorial area to prevent possible vandalism of this historic structure. CCTV cameras would make this location undesirable for alcohol related and anti-social behaviour and to allow for the capturing of evidence for any future investigations at this location.  Yours sincerely  Superintendent Alfio Sergi APM  Commander  Leichhardt Police Area Command |