Qld Surgeons dispute local claims that lockout laws won’t work

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The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) questions assertions from the Cairns City Liquor Safety Accord and others that lockout laws would have an adverse effect on the city’s nightlife, when other vibrant tourist destinations can have responsible trading hours without detriment.

The numbers presented to the public hearing into the State Government’s Tackling Alcohol-fuelled Violence Amendment Bill 2015 by the Cairns City Liquor Safety Accord (CCLSA) do not add up according to RACS surgeons.

RACS says that data on specific details of alcohol related presentations is notoriously unreliable.

Clinicians at the front line support Queensland Health data from Cairns Hospital that shows alcohol presentations having risen 35 per cent over the same period with the hospital recording the second highest number of alcohol-related presentations (950) in the State in 2014/15.

These figures indicate that across Queensland, alcohol-related emergency department presentations have risen over 24 per cent between 2009-10 and 2014-15.

RACS says that alcohol-related emergency department presentations from Brisbane, the Gold Coast, Cairns, Townsville, Rockhampton and Mt Isa, show a pattern of rising alcohol harms that extends beyond the major metropolitan regions in the south east of Queensland.

Local Cairns surgeon and RACS Queensland State Committee member Christina Steffen said there was no proof that lockout laws would have an adverse effect on nightlife in Cairns.

“Sydney’s King’s Cross and Newcastle have seen a decrease in the number of hospital admissions for serious assaults and an increase in new businesses despite warnings of the opposite from industry, providing clear evidence that responsible trading hours works,” Dr Steffen said.

“You only need to see one person’s life ruined through alcohol-related violence, a motor vehicle accident, acute or chronic alcohol abuse to know the dark side of alcohol use, and I have seen far too much of this in my career.

“This is avoidable harm. Now is the time to enact laws that will improve drinking behaviour.

“Studies support this and now is the time to make a change and prevent further trauma on our streets,” Dr Steffen said.
About the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS)
RACS is the leading advocate for surgical standards, professionalism and surgical education in Australia and New Zealand. The College is a not-for-profit organisation that represents more than 7000 surgeons and 1300 surgical trainees and International Medical Graduates. RACS also supports healthcare and surgical education in the Asia-Pacific region and is a substantial funder of surgical research. There are nine surgical specialties in Australasia being: Cardiothoracic surgery, General surgery, Neurosurgery, Orthopaedic surgery, Otolaryngology Head-and-Neck surgery, Paediatric surgery, Plastic and Reconstructive surgery, Urology and Vascular surgery.

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