



August 12th 2019

Opening Statement – Joint Select Committee on Sydney’s Night-Time Economy

In the last few days a number of people who have appeared in front of the committee have acknowledged the tragic circumstances that influenced changes to the liquor laws, in particular what are often referred to as lock-out laws. Today I represent Stay Kind, formerly known as the Thomas Kelly Youth Foundation, established as a result of one of these tragic circumstances, and in honour of Thomas Kelly, 18, who was a victim of unprovoked violence in Kings Cross. I acknowledge Thomas today and I also acknowledge Stuart, Thomas’ brother. After speaking out about his brothers’ death on a number of occasions, Stuart, just a young boy who was growing into a young man was targeted by bullies in a range of circumstances. At 18 and 4 years after Thomas died Stuart ended his life. I acknowledge the Kelly family who have suffered these two unimaginable tragedies, and who have had the courage to establish this Foundation. Stay Kind has a clear purpose and an enduring mission to keep our children safe and get them home to their loved ones, so that other families did not suffer the same loss of a child and brother that the Kelly family experienced. That is why we are appearing here today.

Following the tragic loss of Stuart, the Foundation spent significant time considering research from around the world that would support more effectively harm prevention to our youth. From this review the Foundation determined that the moral disconnect that occurs when bullying, hazing and violence takes place, needed to be addressed through social and behavioural change. For the Foundations work to have greater impact, we needed to focus on grass roots values change and kindness. As a result the Foundation rebranded as Stay Kind in June 2019. Our vision is to make Australia kinder. We know that if Australia was kinder, Thomas, Stuart and the many young people that have died in similar circumstances would most likely still be here.

When the Foundation was originally formed a key strategy was to establish the Take Kare Safe Spaces, to provide interventions that ensure a moment that could go terribly wrong does not. The Take Kare Safe spaces remain a part of



our work as they also represent our core ethos of kindness. Take Kare forms a part of our Stay Kind on the Street initiative and is a public example of kindness.

Many of our volunteers and team leaders give up weekend after weekend to get our youth home safely and to improve the amenity of Sydney.

I would like to note that the Foundation has been inaccurately represented in certain submission/s and should the Joint Select Committee wish to seek clarification of this information, we would take this on notice and submit this post the hearing.

Whatever the Joint Select Committee decides we would like your recommendations to include deliberate and purposeful initiatives that will ensure our loved ones get home safely. One of the ways you can do this is to support the Safe Space program that we have been operating for 4 years. We see ourselves as an essential part of the night-time ecosystem and a vital part at that. I will now detail how the program has operated.

The Town Hall Safe Space opened in December 2014, Kings Cross in July 2015 and Darling Harbour in February 2017 with normal operating hours being 10pm to 4am on a Friday and Saturday night. We believe in data and so we track every intervention. To date we have provided over 69,000 interventions which we call sliding door moments. These can be assistance with wayfinding, reconnecting with friends or family, welfare checks, referrals to other services, phone charging, thongs, rehydration through provision of water through to basic and advanced first aid until an ambulance arrives. Risk of harm and actual harm prevented include violence, sexual assault, theft, road injury and self-harm. There are weekends where we can call for up to 6 ambulances to provide emergency support, but equally we prevent numerous ambulance and police call-outs through support and assistance that enables these emergency services to focus on emergency or higher need situations. We have heard testimony that people want a vibrant and open city and also the importance of a safe city. Our Take Kare Safe Spaces provide a pathway for both.

Our volunteers who have contributed over 18,000 hours to this program are led by first aid trained team leaders. These teams both rove the streets and



operate the Safe Spaces, providing a welcoming environment and enhancing the safety

around the Sydney CBD. We work closely with the City of Sydney CCTV, Darling Harbour Rangers through direct radio contact, NSW Police and NSW Ambulance as situations arise. The Take Kare Safe Spaces are supported by key stakeholders through a Steering Committee. These include the NSW Department of Justice, NSW Health, NSW Transport, Property NSW, City of Sydney, St Vincent's Hospital, Liquor and Gaming NSW. We also provide information to and work with local liquor accords and maintain relationships with many venues.

In 2018 Stay Kind was contacted by the City of Westminster who have since replicated the Take Kare Safe Space program in SOHO London. The SOHO program now operates on a permanent weekend basis with Stay Kind providing the required IP and connecting the UK program to one of our Take Kare volunteers who had relocated to London and assisted with getting the program up and running.

Stay Kind has also formed key partnerships with universities. UNSW is currently concluding a two year study on the community and social benefit of the Take Kare Safe Spaces. The final report will be released in October as is expected to reflect initial findings suggesting a \$4 benefit to the community for every \$1 spent on the program based on the analysis of predominantly two sites, Town Hall and Kings Cross. I provide you today with a copy of the executive summary from this report and submit a full copy of the report as evidence. UTS has invested approximately 300K of in-kind support for the development of our Take Kare app which enables teams to collect data and report electronically rather than hard copy for each intervention. UTS is undertaking further development to enrich the reporting tools that will support the provision of a variety of reports to our stakeholders.

Further shared value has been created by forming a partnership with Charles Sturt university in June 2019. This partnership enables paramedicine students to complete their mandatory community placements via our Take Kare Safe Space program and provides exceptional student experiences. Our first student placement provided the following feedback to his lecturer. *"I heard that you asked about Take Kare in the morning lecture that I didn't attend and I just*



wanted to let you know that it is the best placement experience I'll probably ever have. Being in a first response position in the heart of Sydney nightlife has exposed me to so many awesome experiences from overdose patients, drug and

alcohol intoxication's, interacting with paramedics, treating split lips and cut up faces from assaults and a lot of vomit. It has also helped me improve my skills in

building a rapport with patients and how to deal with aggressive and intoxicated strangers. The Take Kare crew is also fantastic and make the overnight shift blast by, and I've already made promises to come back and join during the summer break."

In addition to this our volunteers have an opportunity to develop social, communication and problem solving skills in a challenging environment.

Current organisational and program partners include the Department of Justice, City of Sydney, Job Link Plus, Budget Car and Truck Rentals. The projected cost for managing and operating the Town Hall, Kings Cross and Darling Harbour sites is approximately \$600,000 pa with the current structure and excluding cpi increases. Stay Kind has been unable to secure additional funding to sustain all three sites. For the last 12 months or so, Stay Kind maintained the Kings Cross and Darling Harbour sites through its own fundraising event. This is not sustainable as long term solution, as a result, Kings Cross and Darling Harbour were closed in July pending further funding applications and opportunities. The absence of the service would have a direct impact on policing, rangers and ambulance services. It would also be reasonable to anticipate that relaxation of the lock-out laws would create greater demand on Safe Space service, or in its absence a decline in the City of Sydney amenity and safety, increased harm to vulnerable persons and greater demand on emergency services.

In concluding my statement I would like to reiterate that all stakeholders of Sydney need to take a long term view and make a long term financial commitment to the Safe Spaces. The Take Kare Safe Spaces enhance the night time amenity, help keep our Sydneysiders, visitors and tourists to Sydney not only stay safe but to stay connected. As much as infrastructure and ride



services maybe catching up to some extent, people often find themselves alone and vulnerable, people still need to be able to stay connected through phone charging or through assistance in reconnection. The stakeholders of Sydney and the general community all benefit from the provision of the Safe Spaces. We have demonstrated that our shared value reaches beyond the geographic borders of Sydney. We see Stay Kind and our program as a core part of the night time solution. The final UNSW Evaluation is expected in October 2019 and will

demonstrate the extensive impact of the program. Translating research into Social Impact Bonds or long term funding solutions takes time. We believe that with five years funding we will be able to make this program self-funding through social impact bonds. Sydney needs this service in Kings Cross, Town Hall, Darling Harbour and potentially new locations such as The Rocks.

Natalie Zelinsky
Chief Operating Officer
Stay Kind