

University of Wollongong

Research Online

Faculty of Law, Humanities and the Arts -
Papers (Archive)

Faculty of Arts, Social Sciences & Humanities

1-1-2018

'Six o'clock is late enough': the 1947 New South Wales liquor referendum

Lauren Samuelsson

University of Wollongong, ljs743@uowmail.edu.au

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/lhapapers>



Part of the [Arts and Humanities Commons](#), and the [Law Commons](#)

Research Online is the open access institutional repository for the University of Wollongong. For further information contact the UOW Library: research-pubs@uow.edu.au

'Six o'clock is late enough': the 1947 New South Wales liquor referendum

Abstract

This article considers the outcome of the controversial 1947 New South Wales liquor referendum. As part of proposed reforms to liquor legislation, the New South Wales government asked the people to decide whether evening trading hours for hotel bars should be extended from six o'clock to either nine or ten o'clock. Early closing was retained with a significant majority, despite widespread recognition that early closing had created a problematic binge-drinking culture. Drawing on newspaper articles, letters to the editor, advertisements, trade journals, parliamentary records and temperance literature, this article will examine why there was such extensive public support for six o'clock closing in 1947. It will focus in particular on the role of two seemingly opposed groups-the temperance movement and the trade union movement-in the campaign to retain early closing, revealing surprisingly similar arguments used by these groups during their campaigns. The article argues that mid-century notions of restraint, moderation and respectability perpetuated public support for restrictive liquor legislation, and that temperance and trade union groups successfully capitalised on these notions in their campaign for six o'clock closing.

Disciplines

Arts and Humanities | Law

Publication Details

Samuelsson, L. (2018). 'Six o'clock is late enough': the 1947 New South Wales liquor referendum. *History Australia*, 15 (4), 744-765.

‘Six O’clock is Late Enough’: the 1947 New South Wales Liquor Referendum

Name: Lauren Samuelsson

Institution: University of Wollongong

Email: ljs743@uowmail.edu.au

Abstract: This article considers the outcome of the controversial 1947 New South Wales liquor referendum. As part of proposed reforms to liquor legislation, the New South Wales government asked the people to decide whether evening trading hours for hotel bars should be extended from six o’clock to either nine or ten o’clock. Early closing was retained with a significant majority, despite widespread recognition that early closing had created a problematic binge-drinking culture. Drawing on newspaper articles, letters to the editor, advertisements, trade journals, parliamentary records and temperance literature this article will examine why there was such extensive public support for six o’clock closing in 1947. It will focus in particular on the role of two seemingly opposed groups – the temperance movement and the trade union movement – in the campaign to retain early closing, revealing surprisingly similar arguments used by these groups during their campaigns. The article argues that mid-century notions of restraint, moderation and respectability perpetuated public support for restrictive liquor legislation, and that temperance and trade union groups successfully capitalised on these notions in their campaign for six o’clock closing.

Keywords: referendum, hotel hours, temperance movement, trade union movement, New South Wales

Author Bio: Lauren Samuelsson is a PhD student in the School of Humanities and Social Inquiry at the University of Wollongong. Her research interests include the cultural history of food and drink. Her PhD research focuses on the role of the *Australian Women’s Weekly* in the creation of modern Australian food culture.

Acknowledgements: This research has been conducted with the support of the Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship

On Saturday 15 February 1947, the people of New South Wales voted in a highly controversial referendum. The New South Wales government had asked voters to decide whether evening trading hours for hotel bars should be extended from the current closing time of six pm to either nine or ten pm. The results of the referendum were clear: 62 per cent of voters in the state supported the continuation of six o'clock closing. The outcome is significant, considering that just seven years later trading hours would be extended as a result of another referendum. Despite this, few historians have considered the reasons behind the outcome of the 1947 vote.

Six o'clock closing was introduced in New South Wales as a temporary measure in 1916 during World War One. It was adopted by a population in the grip of patriotic fervour and highly influenced by temperance forces. The reasons for, and implications of, the 'remarkable Australasian institution of six o'clock closing of hotel bars,' has been considered by historians.¹ Once introduced, early closing proved extraordinarily resilient, and had a dramatic effect on drinking culture in New South Wales. Perhaps the most infamous effect was the 'six o'clock swill', which saw men rushing the bar to drink as much as possible between five and six pm, before the publican called 'Time, gentlemen, please!'² Total alcohol consumption had remained fairly steady during the inter-war years. However, due to the reduction in hotel trading hours most consumption was taking place in a dramatically shorter period, creating a problematic, binge drinking culture.³ This culture was facilitated by the physical transformation of the hotel itself. Traditionally, hotels served as a site for community activity and entertainment. As a result of six o'clock closing, they became a

¹ See Walter Phillips, "'Six o'clock swill': the introduction of early closing of hotel bars in Australia", *Historical Studies* 19, no. 75 (1980): 250. See also Tanja Luckins, "'Satan finds some mischief'?: drinkers' responses to the six o'clock closing of pubs in Australia, 1910s–1930s", *Journal of Australian Studies* 32, no. 3 (2008): 295–307; T Luckins, 'Pigs, hogs and Aussie blokes: The emergence of the term "six o'clock swill"', *History Australia* 4, no. 1 (2007): 08.1–08.17.

² Phillips, "'Six o'clock swill'", 250–51.

³ Anthony Edward Dingle, "'The truly magnificent thirst': An historical survey of Australian drinking habits", *Historical Studies* 19, no. 75 (1980): 227–249; Diane Kirkby, *Barmaids: A history of women's work in pubs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 160–61.

purely functional space, designed to accommodate the masses of men who would visit between the hours of five and six.⁴

This article seeks to understand why the people of New South Wales voted to retain six o'clock closing at the 1947 referendum. It does so by considering arguments made in the public domain in the lead up to the vote, such as examining newspaper articles, letters to the editor, trade journals, parliamentary records, temperance literature and advertisements. What becomes clear is that in 1947 Australian drinking culture was at a crossroads: despite a vocal minority supporting a more progressive and permissive 'cosmopolitan' drinking culture, there was extensive public support for the continuation of restrictive liquor legislation.

Examination of public discourse indicates that this support was sustained by an ideology of restraint and respectability dominant in Australian society at the time. While there have been numerous studies into the impact of the temperance movement on Australian liquor legislation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the relationship between the ideology of restraint and drinking culture in the immediate post-Second World War period has not been considered extensively by Australian historians.⁵ This article aims to address that gap by showing that notions of restraint and moderation not only bridged gender and class barriers but affected the adoption of more permissive liquor legislation in New South Wales in the late 1940s.

Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, liquor legislation in New South Wales was greatly influenced by temperance forces, which campaigned fiercely against 'the demon drink'. However, most scholars agree that by the 1940s anti-drink organisations were

⁴ For more discussion on changes to the hotel as a result of six o'clock closing, see John Maxwell Freeland, *The Australian Pub* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1966); Diane Kirkby, Tanja Luckins, and Chris McConville, *The Australian Pub* (New South Wales: University of New South Wales Press, 2010).

⁵ For two exceptions see the work of Ian Tyrrell and Robin Room. Tyrrell addressed the complex relationship between the 'abstainer' and consumption of tobacco in his paper on Australian smoking practices. Room has considered the impact of the 'wowser' on alcohol regulation throughout the twentieth century. See Ian Tyrrell, 'From the culture of wowserism to the culture of healthism: law, custom, fashion and etiquette in Australian smoking: 1900-1990s', in *Australian Temperance: a mini-conference on the virtues of self-control and moderation in Australian life past and present* (University of New South Wales, 2008), accessed 8 July, 2017, <http://web.maths.unsw.edu.au/~jim/restraintconf.html>; Robin Room, 'The long reaction against the wowser: The prehistory of alcohol deregulation in Australia', *Health Sociology Review* 19, no. 2 (2010): 151-163.

diminishing in response to a liberal cultural shift Australia-wide.⁶ By the 1960s, there had been a significant paradigm shift in the public perception of a drinking culture. The ‘Australian legend’ positioned Australian drinking culture at the centre of an egalitarian, unproblematic, masculinised culture of Australian ‘mateship’.⁷ Indeed, national identity and masculinity became interwoven with pub culture: the pub and the culturally homogenous, sexually exclusive environment that it encouraged were celebrated as being archetypically Australian.⁸ Recently, scholars have been exploring the wider role of drinking in the national narrative, emphasizing the complexities of Australia’s drinking culture particularly in regards to gender.⁹

Consideration of public discourse in the lead up to the referendum indicates that the people of New South Wales were profoundly conflicted about the place of alcohol in their society. Contemporary newspaper reports and letters to the editor illustrate deeply held anxieties about the way that a consideration of the later closing of bars could transform a drinking culture that the public had experienced for over thirty years.¹⁰ The public was uneasy about what the changes to liquor laws would mean for the improvement of hotel conditions and drinking habits, and whether the liquor industry would actually make the promised (and much needed) changes to hotel spaces in order to address problematic drinking practices. The place of women in public bars, the protection of the home, the need for more ‘cosmopolitan’ drinking practices, police corruption and black market liquor were major points of dispute

⁶ Ian Tyrrell outlines the demise of the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union by the 1930s in: Ian Tyrrell, *Woman’s world/Woman’s empire: the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union in international perspective, 1880-1930* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press Books, 1991), 285-89. Patricia Grimshaw outlines work of the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union until the 1930s in: Patricia Grimshaw, ‘Gender, citizenship and race in the woman’s Christian temperance union of Australia, 1890 to the 1930s’, *Australian feminist studies* 13, no. 28 (1998): 199-214. See also, Quentin Beresford, ‘Drinkers and the Anti-Drink Movement in Sydney, 1830-1930’ (PhD thesis, The Australian National University, 1984), 178. Ross Fitzgerald and Trevor Jordan, *Under the influence: A history of alcohol in Australia* (Sydney: ABC Books, HarperCollins Australia, 2011), 144-78. Matthew Richard Allen, ‘The temperance shift: drunkenness, responsibility and the regulation of alcohol in NSW, 1788-1856’ (PhD thesis, University of Sydney, 2013).

⁷ Diane Kirkby, ‘Drinking “The Good Life” Australia c.1880-1980’, in *Alcohol: A social and cultural history*, ed. Mack Holt (Oxford: Berg, 2006), 207-08.

⁸ Kirkby, *Barmaids*, 2; Diane Kirkby and Tanja Luckins, “‘Winnies and pats ... brighten our pubs’: Transforming the gendered spatial economy in the Australian pub, 1920-1970”, *Journal of Australian Studies* 30, no. 87 (2006): 75.

⁹ A.E. Dingle, Walter Phillips, Diane Kirkby, Clare Wright and Tanja Luckins have all challenged this perception of alcohol in Australian society – exploring economics, class and gender.

¹⁰ Newspapers examined include the urban *Sydney Morning Herald (SMH)*, *Truth*, *The Sun*, *The Australian Worker* and numerous regional newspapers.

regarding later closing. Public discourse also concentrated on long-held concerns for working conditions that had arisen in prior debates over early closing.¹¹ These enduring apprehensions, many of which were a result of the actions of the liquor industry during the time of early closing, were reinforced by a massive campaign in the lead up to the referendum led by groups opposed to the extension of hours.

In addition to the wider public debate about trading hours, this article will also consider the campaigns of temperance and union groups, highlighting complex ideological entanglements surrounding the extension of trading hours. Unions and temperance campaigners have often been seen as inhabiting different sides of the divide in regards to class and gender issues surrounding alcohol consumption. But in this campaign, both groups were passionate in their support for six o'clock closing, reflecting the hegemony of restraint and respectability in mid-twentieth century Australian life. While support for the earlier closing hour was to be expected from temperance advocates who had crusaded against the drink trade for almost a century, trade unions were also active in the referendum debate. Union opinion on extended trading hours was multifaceted and complex. Tradition dictated that a working-man deserved a drink at the end of a long day's work, but an extension of trading hours was contrary to the union goals at the time of reducing working hours. As a result, union support for the vote was divided, with the two major unions for employees in the liquor trades fighting on opposing sides.¹² Given the central place that trade unionism held in Australia's post-war society, these union campaigns were highly publicised.¹³

From the outset there was conflict between the union and temperance movements, and both engaged in a gendered struggle for cultural dominance in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth

¹¹ Walter Phillips assessed links between the *Early Closing Acts* and restrictive liquor legislation in the early twentieth century. See Phillips, "Six o'clock swill". Evidence of unions protesting against extension of hotel hours is apparent in the ongoing debate over closing hours from the end of the First World War and through the 1920s.

¹² The two main unions were the Liquor Trades Employees Union, which campaigned against any extension of hours and the Hotel, Club and Restaurant Employees Union. The Hotel, Club and Restaurant Employees Union aligned itself with the United Licensed Victuallers' Association and supported ten o'clock closing.

¹³ Bradley Bowden, 'The Rise and Decline of Australian Unionism: A History of Industrial Labour from the 1820s to 2010', *Labour history*, no. 100 (2011): 51-82; Luckins, "Satan finds some mischief", 302.

century Australian society.¹⁴ From the late 1890s, the temperance and union movements became symbols of the feminine and masculine in Australian society. Masculinist culture in Australia celebrated the 'independent, free-wheeling bushman', and revelled in the 'pleasures of drinking, smoking, [and] gambling.' The rise of the trade union movement was emblematic of the rise of this masculinist culture, and the term 'union' was synonymous with ideas of mateship and masculinity. The working-class labour movement 'was men's movement.'¹⁵

On the other end of the spectrum the women's movement, including the temperance movement, developed in opposition to Australian masculinist culture. The women's movement sought to eliminate what they considered to be the main sources of injury to women and children: 'Whisky, Seduction, Gambling and Cruelty.'¹⁶ Beginning in the 1880s, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) was one of the first groups in Australia to organise middle-class women to undertake social reform. In doing so, social reform on issues such as alcohol became tied up with wider social issues such as women's suffrage.¹⁷ There were clashes between male unionists and female reformers on topics such as female suffrage and female labour up until the late 1930s.¹⁸ Alcohol, both its consumption and its availability, was another site of volatile clashes between the two groups.¹⁹

As sobriety gradually became linked with respectability and status in the early twentieth century, temperance ideals began to appeal to the wider population. Temperance became something of a 'popular cause' supported not only by the middle-class but also 'respectable'

¹⁴ Marilyn Lake, 'Historical reconsiderations IV: The politics of respectability: Identifying the masculinist context', *Historical Studies* 22, no. 86 (1986): 123-24.

¹⁵ See *ibid.*, 121; Marilyn Lake, 'Socialism and manhood: the case of William Lane', *Labour History*, no. 50 (1986): 54.

¹⁶ Lake, 'Historical reconsiderations IV,' 127.

¹⁷ Ian Tyrrell, 'International Aspects of the Woman's Temperance Movement in Australia: The Influence of the American WCTU, 1882-1914', *Journal of Religious History* 12, no. 3 (1983): 295-96.

¹⁸ Stuart Macintyre, *The Oxford History of Australia*, vol. 4: The Succeeding Age 1901-1942 (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1986), 321.

¹⁹ Jennifer Curtin, *Women and trade unions: A comparative perspective* (Aldershot: Ashgate Pub Ltd, 1999), 42; Audrey Oldfield, *Woman Suffrage in Australia* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 82.

working men and women.²⁰ These ‘respectable’ men and women, Robert Menzies’ ‘forgotten people’, were the embodiment of a middle-Australia that was industrious, self-reliant, responsible, and above all, rooted in domesticity.²¹ Menzies claimed ‘The home is the foundation of sanity and sobriety’, and certainly, by the middle decades of the twentieth century domestic virtues were deemed to be integral to ‘the Australian way of life’.²² The outcome of the 1947 referendum illustrates not only the effect that ideals of domesticity, restraint and moderation had on Australian society during the first half of the twentieth century, it also reveals valuable insights on the relationship between temperance and union ideology and highlights the complexity of post-war drinking culture in New South Wales.

‘The People Must Decide’: public debate commences

The *Liquor (Amendment) Bill 1946* was introduced to parliament by the McKell Labor government, and was passed in April 1946. The revised act introduced a number of reforms, including additional club licenses, licenses for restaurants and standardisation of glass sizes, in an effort to ameliorate the liquor industry. By far the most contested provision of the new act was the requirement for a referendum on hotel trading hours to be held within twelve months with the date of the referendum finally set for November 1946.²³ The proposed changes to the legislation were suggested, in part, by public dissatisfaction with the state of the liquor industry that had culminated in a ‘public clamour’ for reform.²⁴

Six o’clock closing, which had changed the fundamental character of the pub was somewhat to blame for public dissatisfaction, but cuts to beer production during the Second World War led to an escalation of binge drinking practices and further changes to drinking conditions.²⁵

²⁰ Richard Waterhouse, *Private pleasures, public leisure: a history of Australian popular culture since 1788* (South Melbourne: Longman Australia, 1995), 108-09.

²¹ Judith Brett, *Robert Menzies’ forgotten people* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1992), 5-14.

²² John Murphy, *Imagining the fifties: private sentiment and political culture in Menzies’ Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2000), 7.

²³ *Liquor (Amendment) Act 1946*, (NSW) Act No. 34, s 2.

²⁴ New South Wales, Legislative Assembly, ‘Debates’, (April 9, 1946), 3228-29.

²⁵ See Freeland, *The Australian Pub*, 175-76; Luckins, ‘Pigs, hogs and Aussie blokes’, 08.5-08.12.

In addition to problematic binge drinking, increased total alcohol consumption in the immediate post-war period indicated that six o'clock closing was not achieving its objective.²⁶ Contemporary reports illustrate the 'revolting' conditions present in hotel bars. A reporter for the *Sydney Morning Herald* vividly described conditions in a city hotel during the 'rush' in 1945:

A small bar, poorly lighted, packed with men literally fighting their way to the counter, tempers rising because the service could not meet the demand, because early comers held to places at the bar, because the "collars" were too high on hastily drawn glasses ... This was a time of supposedly convivial drinking ... It would be impossible to imagine more degrading, even nauseating, conditions.²⁷

Many people publicly proclaimed their resentment towards the liquor industry for forcing patrons to drink in such dismal conditions.²⁸ Wrote one unhappy pub-goer, 'Anyone can see the milling crowd in most hotels between the hours stated. But why? It is a condition deliberately created by the trade...'.²⁹ Certainly, the public felt that there needed to be substantial reforms to an industry that facilitated binge drinking in these conditions. There was intense criticism of the liquor industry's 'cavalier disregard of drinkers' rights, comfort and convenience during the war years.'³⁰

The need for the referendum was supported by both the Government and the Opposition, who agreed that the liquor laws were outdated and needed amendment. The vote was non-political as both sides of parliament agreed that 'the hour should only be altered consequent upon a deliberate determination by the people themselves.'³¹ Premier McKell noted that 'people differed widely as to the form the liquor laws should take' and 'there was little chance of

²⁶ Dingle, "The Truly Magnificent Thirst", 246.

²⁷ 'Our Drinking Habits Badly Need Civilising', *SMH*, 9 November 1945, 2.

²⁸ Luckins, 'Pigs, hogs and Aussie blokes', 08.7.

²⁹ "'Hog Swill" Drinking And Referendum', *The Farmer and Settler*, 27 September 1946, 14.

³⁰ 'Implications of the Vote', *SMH*, 17 February 1947, 2.

³¹ New South Wales, 'Debates', (April 9, 1946), 3221.

obtaining anything in the nature of a compromise between ... opposing opinions.’³² The truth of his observation was borne out in parliament, where despite neither party developing a position on closing hours, there was vehement disagreement on the form that the liquor laws should take.

Vernon Treatt, the Leader of the Opposition, claimed that the bill did not go far enough in addressing the problems with the liquor industry, and as such, would not meet the needs of the community. He said, ‘the public clamour for permanent and sweeping liquor reforms has apparently reached the ears of the Government only as a faint whisper.’³³ Evelyn Darby, the Liberal Member for Manly, raised a litany of concerns with the bill, many of which were reflective of public opinion. Mr Darby, who believed that ‘liquor is one of our greatest social menaces’, felt that the bill made no attempt to make drunkenness less likely, nor to provide for more leisurely drinking given its failure to address the sins of the liquor industry.³⁴ Abram Landa, the Labor member for Bondi responded to concerns about the bill, stating that ‘no one will believe for a moment that ... [the] bill ... will succeed in removing all of the abuses of the liquor trade’, but that he believed that ‘one of the greatest causes of liquor abuses is due to the fact that hotels close at 6 o’clock’ and that six o’clock closing had failed to prove itself a useful tool in reducing alcohol abuse. He compared drinking in New South Wales with the cities of London, New York and Paris, a theme that would rise through public discourse time and time again. Landa claimed that, unlike the rush to the pub in New South Wales, the rush between five and six o’clock in those cities was ‘to the railway station, buses and trams’ in order to go home.³⁵ Opinions expressed in the Legislative Assembly paralleled those raised by the general public and demonstrated an overall ideological stance of restraint. Many MPs expressed disdain for the corrupt liquor industry, supported moderate alcohol consumption,

³² ‘People Must Decide New Liquor Laws’, *Northern Star*, 10 April 1946, 5.

³³ New South Wales, ‘Debates’, (April 9, 1946), 3228-29.

³⁴ Darby was also the organiser of the Manly-Warringah Six O’clock League. *Ibid.*, 3243-48.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 3259-61.

and voiced reservations about the ambiguous outcome of changing a law which had stood unaltered for over thirty years.³⁶

In response to news of the referendum, the liquor industry, led by the New South Wales branch of the United Licenced Victualler's Association (ULVA), immediately supported the extension of trading hours. The ULVA appealed to hotelkeepers to advocate for the extension of trading hours. Every hotelkeeper, they claimed, needed to do 'his part to impress on his customers the need for a change in the closing hour'.³⁷ The ULVA was aware that some licensees would not be in favour of extending trading hours as it would mean that they would have to conduct business after six o'clock but implored them, in the interests of the whole trade, to put their personal views aside.³⁸ The liquor industry ran a strong campaign in support of later closing. The mysterious 'Social Amenities League', which the New South Wales Temperance Alliance (the Alliance) called 'the innocent looking agent of the Liquor Interests', was prolific in its advertising during the lead up to the referendum.³⁹ The secretary of the League claimed that they wanted 'to give freedom for women to enjoy social community life with men, and to encourage overseas tourists to visit Australia by providing social amenities available in other parts of the world.'⁴⁰

The League's advertising addressed many concerns that the public had raised in regard to the possible extension of hours, including how later closing would impact home life and the need for leisurely drinking. They appealed to notions of domesticity and restraint in many of their advertisements. In one advertisement, published in no less than ten newspapers in June and July 1946, the Social Amenities League used the motif of the returned soldier to further their cause. The advertisement [Fig. 1], with its large banner proclaiming 'A pleasure that is

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ 'Hotelkeepers' Important Task in Referendum Campaign', *U.L.V.A. Review*, 19 June 1946, 1.

³⁸ Ibid.; 'Work for 10 p.m. at Referendum. Strong Appeal to Hotelkeepers Made at U.L.V.A. Council', *U.L.V.A. Review*, 19 June 1946, 2.

³⁹ 'S.A.L.', New South Wales Temperance Alliance, Advertisement, *GRIT: a journal of national efficiency and prohibition (GRIT)*, 10 July 1946, 2.

⁴⁰ 'The Way I See It', *The Sun*, 30 June 1946, 7.

denied us here', highlighted that 'Men who saw war-time service in Britain enjoyed one feature of life over there which is sadly lacking here'. The advertisement went on to extol the virtues of leisurely drinking, and asked 'Why should we be obliged to drink at crowded bars, in haste and discomfort, with "one eye on the clock"?'⁴¹ Even in their calls for an extension of hours, the liquor industry was appealing to notions of moderation and respectability, supporting the idea of moderate drinking and even using terms such as 'homeliness' and 'hospitality' to refer to an idealised drinking culture.



Figure 1: 'A pleasure that is denied us here', Social Amenities League, Advertisement, *U.L.V.A. Review*, 16 July 1946, 10.

⁴¹ 'A Pleasure that is Denied Us Here', Social Amenities League, Advertisement. Newspapers and journals containing this advertisement in the June-July 1946 period included: *The Bulletin*, *The Australian Worker*, *Truth*, *Mudgee Guardian* and *North-Western Representative*, *Daily Examiner* (Grafton), *The Northern Champion*, *The Forbes Advocate*, *Tweed Daily*, *The Murrumbidgee Irrigator*, and the *U.L.V.A. Review*.

Returned servicemen were a segment of the population that *had* been exposed to alternative drinking practices around the world, and was an integral part of the public debate on the extension of hours, particularly given the provisions for Returned Servicemen's Clubs in the new legislation. P.K. Parbury, an ex-Lieutenant Colonel claimed:

Ex-Serviceman who have travelled to England or to other countries during the war will remember the extremely pleasant and sensible life other communities have with late closing hours. It seems wrong that we in N.S.W. should not enjoy the same amenities which exist in other countries of the world.⁴²

It was clear that the experience of the Second World War had opened some Australians' eyes to the potential for the hotel to become a central place for leisure, given their experiences in other countries (particularly England) during the war.⁴³ One well-travelled member of the public reported that the '10 p.m. or 10.30 p.m. closing in England is the most sensible I have ever experienced.' The conditions in English hotels were also described as 'being built for greater comfort' with the provision of refreshments and entertainment frequently offered, and with levels of drunkenness far lower than what could be seen on an average night anywhere in New South Wales.⁴⁴ Civilised drinking practices, people believed, reflected a democratic, clean society, which aligned with the dominant cultural values of the time. In this context, the public call for a more civilised way of drinking and the hotel to be a place of leisure was a campaign to secure a fundamental right of the citizen.⁴⁵

Public concern over drinking practices also stemmed from the sexually segregated drinking that prevailed in the state. As a result of early closing, changes to hotels had reinforced the pub as a site of gender conflict in New South Wales. Women were present in the role of

⁴² 'Reader's Views on the Hotel Hours Poll', *SMH*, 14 February 1947, 2.

⁴³ Ibid.; 'Liquor and the People', *SMH*, 1 February 1947, 2.

⁴⁴ 'Letters to the Editor', *SMH*, 12 February 1947, 2.

⁴⁵ Luckins, 'Pigs, hogs and Aussie blokes', 08.10.

worker, but were significantly absent in the role of drinker. The public bar, the area of the pub that so captured the imagination of the nation, was patronised exclusively by men. The dominant ‘perpendicular drinking’ style became a symbol of masculine dominance of the hotel space.⁴⁶ Though women continued to patronise the Ladies’ Lounge, a place where women created their own hotel culture, and also laboured behind the bar, many of them considered themselves excluded from the dominant drinking culture.⁴⁷ The hotel was a vital source of waged labour for women in the early twentieth century, but the public bar ‘did not become women’s space simply because women worked there’.⁴⁸ Unlike some other states, New South Wales liquor laws were highly restrictive in regard to both female custodians and customers; limiting female access to the masculine domain of the public bar. It was not until the amendments to the *Liquor Act* in 1946 that females were able to hold a licence in New South Wales.⁴⁹ Female drinkers were also at a disadvantage under New South Wales liquor legislation. During the war, women had been prohibited from entering the public bar, and despite the 1946 amendments revoking it the ULVA reminded hotelkeepers that ‘the Liquor Act does not prevent women from being served in bars, although the licensee has the right to refuse if he so desires.’⁵⁰ Indeed, even though women were not legally forbidden from drinking in the public bar, the prevailing masculine drinking culture had confirmed the belief that ‘respectable’ women did not drink in a pub. While it is certainly not reasonable to suggest that all women (particularly those of the working class) practised abstinence, what

⁴⁶ Jocelyn Pixley, ‘Wowser and Pro-Woman Politics: Temperance against Australian Patriarchy’, *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology* 27, no. 3 (1991): 305.

⁴⁷ See Kirkby and Luckins, “‘Winnies and pats ... brighten our pubs’: Transforming the gendered spatial economy in the Australian pub, 1920–1970”; Kirkby, *Barmaids*; Kirkby, “‘The Barmaid’”, “The Landlady” and “The Pub[lican]’s Wife”: History, Law and Popular Culture of Women’s Work in Pubs’, in *Romancing the Toms: Popular Culture, Law and Feminism*, ed. Margaret Thornton (London: Taylor and Francis, 2002): 167–83; Clare Wright, “‘Doing the beans’: Women, drinking and community in the ladies’ lounge”, *Journal of Australian Studies* 27, no. 76 (2003): 5–16; Clare Wright, *Beyond the Ladies Lounge: Australia’s female publicans* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2003).

⁴⁸ Kirkby and Luckins, “‘Winnies and pats ... brighten our pubs’”, 75.

⁴⁹ The *Liquor Act* (1912) expressly forbade single females to apply for a licence. Married women were only able to apply for a licence if they had obtained a protection order under the *Deserted Wives and Children Act* (1901), were legally separated, or their husband had been declared insane. Changes to wording in the 1946 amendments allowed any person over the age of 21 to hold a licence. The first single female licensee, Miss Dorothy Hartigan, was granted a licence in October 1946 and the first married female licensee, Mrs Ellen Hipwell, was granted a licence in February 1947.

⁵⁰ ‘New Liquor Act Now Operates’, *U.L.V.A Review*, October 18, 1946, 4; ‘Answers to Questions Asked by Hotelkeepers’, *U.L.V.A Review*, January 20, 1947, 32.

this pattern of drinking suggests is that the majority of women were influenced enough by the dominant ideologies of restraint and respectability to avoid frequenting (or being seen frequenting) public bars.⁵¹

The Second World War introduced many young women to the working world and the pleasures of leisure. To many, this development was horrifying, with Jessie Street, the president of the United Associations of Women, calling Sydney a ‘cesspool of vice’.⁵² Contemporary news articles reported that ‘excessive drinking is still rampant, especially by young military trainees and women’ and that ‘nearly every hotel lounge is crowded by girls’ some of whom ‘were there without their husbands’ knowledge.’⁵³ Like those soldiers who had seen drinking practices in other countries, examination of public discourse in the lead up to the referendum indicates that many women supported the extension of hours. They wanted a more inclusive drinking environment with improved conditions, and to be able to drink in convivial surroundings with their husbands and friends.

Alice Jackson, the editor of the *Australian Women’s Weekly* (the *Weekly*) was one of the women that supported ten o’clock closing in the hope that Australian hotels would become ‘places where homely, genial gatherings can be made the rule, and not the exception.’ The *Weekly*, which was highly influential during the post-war era, constructed itself as a reflection of Australian (Anglo-Celtic, middle-class) womanhood. Given this, and the magazine’s proclaimed neutral stance on the referendum, Jackson’s full-page editorial supporting ten o’clock is noteworthy. Jackson drew on the ideals of domesticity and restraint in her calls for later closing. She addressed individual responsibility, stating ‘nobody can be made sober by regulations’ and pointing out that a change in hours would not lead to ‘suburban housewives reeling home’ after 10 o’clock. Jackson even called for the referral of ‘confirmed toppers’ to

⁵¹ Wright, “‘Doing the beans’: Women, drinking and community in the ladies’ lounge”, 8-9.

⁵² Quoted in Marilyn Lake, ‘Female desires: the meaning of World War II’, *Australian Historical Studies* 24, no. 95 (1990): 279.

⁵³ ‘Liquor Reforms Needed. Drinking Abuses Widespread. Danger to Morale in War-Time’, *SMH*, 30 July 1942, 4.

Alcoholics Anonymous – a progressive stance given the organisation’s infancy in Australia.⁵⁴ Her support for ten o’clock closing clearly ruffled feathers at the Alliance, and perhaps they felt a sense of betrayal from a magazine that was generally considered conservatively domestic in its ideology. After the referendum the Alliance published a cartoon entitled ‘Down and Out’ which showed a figure representing the *Weekly* clearly shocked and horrified at the victory of six o’clock closing. It was captioned ‘The Bigger They Are – The Harder They Fall’.⁵⁵ [Fig. 2]

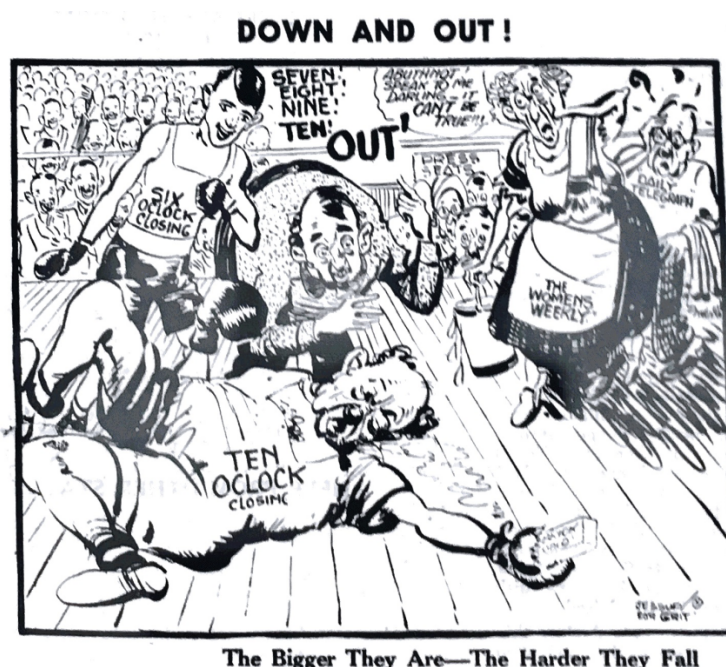


Figure 2: ‘Down and Out’, *GRIT*, 10 March 1947, 1.

Seemingly ignoring the minority of women who supported an extension of hours, the press attributed the outcome of the referendum to the women’s vote, reflecting the notion of

⁵⁴ Alice Jackson, ‘Our Editor’s views on 10 p.m. closing’, *The Weekly*, 15 February 1947, 9. The first Australian branch of Alcoholics Anonymous opened in 1945.

⁵⁵ ‘Down and Out’, *GRIT*, 10 March 1947, 1.

women acting as society's moral guardians.⁵⁶ Many women's groups actively addressed the 'liquor question' in public debate, highlighting the threat that alcohol posed to the values of domesticity and womanhood. Members of middle-class women's groups such as the Housewives Association, which emphasised 'the values of responsibility and care for others, hard work, thrift, fidelity and a personal morality', were active in the referendum debate.⁵⁷ Eleanor Glencross, the state president of the Housewives Association of New South Wales, was particularly vocal in her concerns for the protection of 'wholesome family life' in her letter published on the morning of the referendum. 'Who is going to mind the children?' she questioned, before going on to stress the impact of later hours on family life:

Husbands who stay out until 7 o'clock instead of 6 will frequently miss the opportunity of the companionship and enjoyment of their children if they have two or three more drinks ... We urge all housewives not to vote for any extension of hours.⁵⁸

Concerns about the neglect of the home were not limited to the drinking habits of men. These women felt that the creation of comfortable drinking spaces that were open for longer would lure women to stay out all night, thus undermining family stability. Jessie McDonald, a member of the WCTU wrote a pleading letter in response to claims by the liquor industry that 'it would be nice for husband and wife to be able to go to the hotel for a quiet drink together.' What was to become of the children while both parents were jaunting to the pub? She wondered. Would they be left to their own devices or, even worse, would they accompany their parents? She closed her letter calling for all right-minded people to maintain six o'clock closing, 'for the sake of the children.'⁵⁹

⁵⁶ In the days before the referendum, the *Sun* published opinions from women that they questioned about the way that they would vote. They claimed that the women that they questioned were 'unanimously in favour of 6 o'clock closing,' with women claiming issues such as comfort in hotels, men arriving at dances 'smelling of drink' and the dubious ability of Australians to drink 'civilly' as reasons that they were choosing to vote for six. See 'Easy Win For Six O'clock Predicted By Union Man', *The Sun*, 11 February 1947, 5.

⁵⁷ J Smart, 'A Mission to the Home: The Housewives' Association, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union and Protestant Christianity, 1920-1940', *Australian Feminist Studies* 13, no. 28 (1998): 215-234.

⁵⁸ 'More Readers' Views on the Referendum', *SMH*, 15 February 1947, 2.

⁵⁹ 'Plea for 6 O'clock Closing', *The Armidale Express*, 14 February 1947, 8.

The wider public and political debate surrounding the extension of trading hours centred on several impactful themes: the evils perpetuated by the liquor industry, the need to protect the home, and gendered patterns of consumption. Notions of restraint, respectability, civility and moderation were woven throughout public opinion on the ‘liquor issue’, and these notions clearly influenced the way the citizens of New South Wales viewed the place of alcohol in society.

A Great Moral Issue?: Temperance and the referendum.

Thirty years after the introduction of early closing, temperance groups once again mobilised to campaign in support of six o’clock closing. The New South Wales Temperance Alliance (the Alliance) spearheaded the campaign. The Alliance was a well-established coalition of temperance groups which had representatives from both churches and temperance organisations such as the WCTU. The Alliance commenced their campaign early, in May 1946, calling for volunteer workers to support ‘the only organization officially representing and uniting the Churches and Temperance forces, and leading the campaign’.⁶⁰ In addition to the large-scale advertising campaign by the Alliance, groups such as the WCTU and the New South Wales Churches of Christ Social Services Committee were notable in campaigning for early closing in their own publications.⁶¹ Examination of temperance discourse in the lead up to the referendum reveals that their campaign addressed the anxieties of wide segments of the population, including protection of the home and family, the ‘evils’ of the liquor industry and worker’s rights.

In the lead up to the referendum, the notion of protecting the home was highly evident in the temperance campaign. ‘The HOME Must Come FIRST’, exclaimed *The Voice in the Wilderness*, a publication of the New South Wales Churches of Christ Social Services

⁶⁰ ‘Six O’Clock Closing Campaign’, N.S.W. Temperance Alliance, Advertisement, *The Methodist*, 18 May 1946, 4.

⁶¹ The WCTU published the *White Ribbon Signal*, although by 1947, it was a national publication. The New South Wales Churches of Christ Social Services Committee published *The Voice in the Wilderness*.

Committee, in January 1947.⁶² Another section of the same publication exemplifies the direct appeal to voters to protect the home and family from the ills of the liquor industry:

“He’ll never be home.”

That was the cryptic remark of a wife and mother when it was suggested that there might be 10 o’clock closing ...there was tragedy in those words. It was bad enough now. Tea waiting for hours. Not a sign of Dad on Saturday afternoons. Things to be done about the place – No Dad!⁶³

This emotionally charged image of the forlorn family, waiting for the return of their father, was a tried and true motif of temperance campaigning.⁶⁴ Arguments addressing anxieties about liquor’s destructive effect on the ‘domestic ideal’ were certainly in keeping with temperance values of ‘domesticity, maternalism and sexual restraint,’ but they also played into the overall attitude of restraint in Australian culture at the time.⁶⁵ Many proponents of ‘respectable’ society, whether middle- or working-class, shared the ideal that the working man should be ‘honest, sober and industrious’. Supporting ones’ family had become a powerful motivator for male workers to be ‘reliable and diligent,’ and arguments such as these appealed to notions of respectability.⁶⁶

Temperance groups had long relied on women as their support base, and their referendum campaign embraced their traditional narrative of the role of women as the ‘moral guardians’ of society. However, in this fight, the temperance movement needed to win the support of groups other than women and evangelical Christians. To appeal to the wider community, the temperance movement diversified their argument. As well as appealing to traditional

⁶² Churches of Christ in N.S.W., *The Voice in the Wilderness*, January 1947, N.S.W Executive – Printed Material, 1886-1967, MLMSS 3641, Box 2010, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.

⁶³ Churches of Christ in N.S.W., *The Voice in the Wilderness*, January 1947, N.S.W Executive – Printed Material, 1886-1967, MLMSS 3641, Box 2010, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.

⁶⁴ Phillips, “‘Six o’clock swill’”, 265.

⁶⁵ Wright, *Beyond the Ladies Lounge: Australia’s female publicans*, 154.

⁶⁶ Lake, ‘Historical reconsiderations IV’, 130; Anne Summers, *Damned Whores and God’s Police*, Second Revised Edition, (Victoria: Penguin Books, 2002), 216-17.

temperance philosophies, they fought on a platform of economics, workers' rights, and public mistrust of the liquor industry.

Temperance advocates despised the liquor trade. They believed that brewers, distillers and hoteliers were to blame for the myriad societal ills associated with drinking. Drinkers were considered passive victims of the liquor industry who needed to be protected by social reforms.⁶⁷ The WCTU espoused that 'the liquor trade is essentially greedy and selfish; and, selling a product that causes men and women to lose respect for themselves and the law'.⁶⁸ As seen in the wider debate, public anxieties ran wild over the liquor industry's ability, or desire, to reform drinking conditions and eliminate 'hog-swill' drinking habits. Many public commentators believed that the 'liquor monopoly' was pushing for an extension of hours to increase profits without plans to improve facilities in hotels. Indeed, some moderate drinkers highlighted their mistrust of the liquor industry to improve conditions as a reason that they would vote for six o'clock closing. A letter from 'Bacchus', published in the *Herald* on the morning of the referendum illustrated the conflict of the moderate drinker. Bacchus wrote: 'Although I would welcome the opportunity of enjoying companionship over a drink or drinks after 6 p.m. ...I have reluctantly decided to vote against any extension of the present hours.' He then went on to give six reasons that led him to make that decision. Notably, he said that not only did he have 'a fear that the disgraceful conduct seen outside some suburban hotels near 6 p.m. will extend to 10 p.m.,' but that he had 'a growing suspicion that the alteration of closing times will not result in any better consideration for the public.'⁶⁹ The *Herald* agreed. They stated that 'Even if the referendum results in an alteration of the present inimical trading hours, the majority will still have to do their drinking leaning against sloppy

⁶⁷ Fitzgerald and Jordan, *Under the Influence*, 167-70.

⁶⁸ 'Public Pays for Sly Grog Risks', *White Ribbon Signal*, September 1946, 129, Temperance Union, MLMSS 3641, Box 2013, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.

⁶⁹ 'Six Reasons' in 'More Readers' Views on the Referendum', *SMH*, 15 February 1947, 2.

bar counters, with no opportunity to sit down comfortably or to have something to eat with their liquor.⁷⁰

Temperance groups took advantage of public distrust for the liquor industry that was exposed via public discourse. Temperance advocates scoffed at the concept of ‘leisurely drinking’, a key term used by the liquor industry in their campaign for ten o’clock closing. *The Voice in the Wilderness* pinpoints temperance stance on the issue:

All the talk about “social amenities,” “leisurely drinking,” etc., is just so much camouflage. Evening drinking – during the hours of leisure – is costly, dangerous drinking, that can benefit no one but the liquor monopoly!⁷¹

In his advice to voters in the week of the referendum, the Reverend Canon G.A.M Nell stated:

They claim that as soon as a later closing hour is permitted drinking conditions will be made better in all hotels. **But why wait for longer hours before these improvements are made?** [*bold emphasis in the original*]⁷²

By targeting public dissatisfaction with the perceived self-interest of the liquor industry, temperance advocates were cleverly moving their campaign away from moral arguments for temperance and secularising their message to reach a wider audience.

The temperance campaign also leveraged public dissatisfaction toward the liquor industry by addressing the economic repercussions of later closing. Advertisements in the lead up to the referendum highlighted the economic self-interest of the liquor industry. ‘Are we to let brewers pile up profits at the expense of the nation?’ one Temperance pamphlet queried. An extension of hours, they claimed ‘...means much MORE drinking – bigger sales – more

⁷⁰ ‘Liquor and the People’, *SMH*, 1 February 1947, 2.

⁷¹ Churches of Christ in N.S.W., *The Voice in the Wilderness*, January 1947, N.S.W Executive – Printed Material, 1886-1967, MLMSS 3641, Box 2010, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.

⁷² ‘Liquor Referendum. Advice to Voters’, *Crookwell Gazette*, 12 February 1947, 3.

profits...'⁷³ This image of the greedy, monopolistic liquor industry was used frequently in the temperance campaign. One advertisement, published the day before the referendum, shows the long arm of the liquor industry reaching past the barricade of six o'clock closing, grasping for the public purse.⁷⁴ [Fig 3]

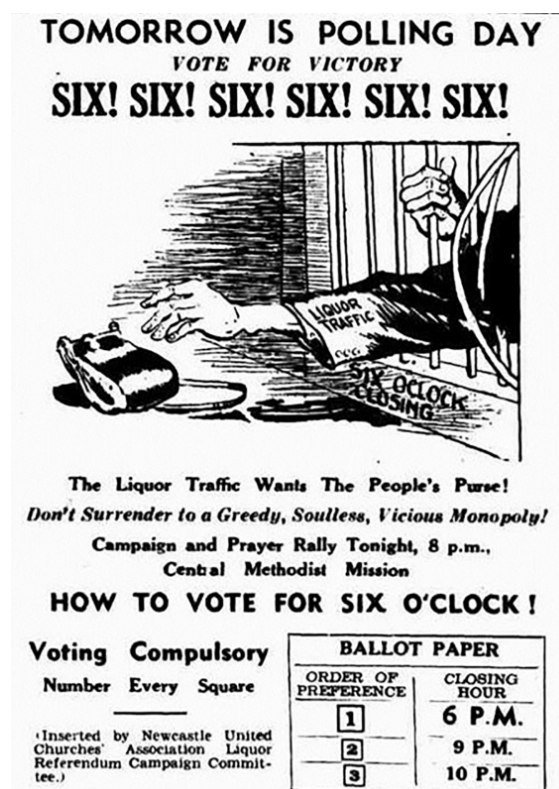


Figure 3: 'Advertising', Newcastle United Churches' Association Liquor Referendum Campaign Committee, Advertisement, *The Newcastle Sun*, 14 February 1947, 15.

Suspicious over the greed of the liquor industry were associated with mid-century ideas of restraint and thrift, particularly for the working classes. Temperance forces truly believed that legislating to restrict alcohol consumption would relieve the poverty that they attributed to

⁷³ N.S.W. Temperance Alliance, 'Leisurely Drinking!', c.1947, N.S.W Executive – Printed Material, 1886-1967, MLMSS 3641, Box 2010, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.

⁷⁴ 'Advertising', Newcastle United Churches' Association Liquor Referendum Campaign Committee, Advertisement, *The Newcastle Sun*, 14 February 1947, 15.

the ‘drunken habits of the working classes.’⁷⁵ Not only did temperance advocates perceive drinkers as being economically irresponsible but they were concerned about the real cost of alcohol on a drinker’s family fortunes.⁷⁶ Temperance fixation on the cost of alcohol to the economy was highly visible in their six o’clock campaign. Advertisements and opinion pieces portrayed the New South Wales drink bill as evidence of the success of six o’clock closing. One advertisement claimed, ‘England with later closing spends twice as much per head of population as does Australia,’ going on to explain that ‘The U.S. spends even more ... Ten o’clock closing will mean more money for the distillers and breweries, and less money for the children and the home.’⁷⁷ Another article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* gave a monetary value to the cost of liquor to New South Wales, calling into question claims that other countries are better off with longer hours of trade. The United States, they reported, had a liquor bill of more than £17 per head, while New South Wales spent less than £8 per capita.⁷⁸ Comparisons such as these celebrated notions of restraint and thrift, appealing especially to those who were living on an inadequate income. The notion of economic security being threatened by extension of hotel trading hours led to two further interesting arguments from temperance forces.

Firstly, the need for economic equality for businesses was highlighted during the campaign. This argument garnered support for the continuation of six o’clock closing, particularly from retailers. Walter Phillips detailed how temperance reformers used legislation that set the closing hours for all retail shops in the state to six o’clock, as a tool to secure ‘a much earlier closing hour’ for public houses during the 1916 six o’clock campaign.⁷⁹ What is interesting is that temperance advocates continued to utilise this argument thirty years later in 1947.

Clearly, the idea of alcohol as an inferior commodity was considered persuasive. ‘Who would

⁷⁵ Beresford, ‘Drinkers and the Anti-Drink Movement in Sydney, 1830-1930’, 33, 179.

⁷⁶ Room, ‘The long reaction against the wowser’, 153.

⁷⁷ Rev. Canon G.A.M. Nell, ‘Liquor Referendum: advice to voters’, *Crookwell Gazette*, 12 February 1947, 3.

⁷⁸ ‘Cases for and Against Later Hotel Closing’, *SMH*, 13 February 1947, 2.

⁷⁹ Phillips, “‘Six o’clock swill””, 266.

benefit from the change [to hours]?’ asked one newspaper article, ‘Would butchers, bakers, grocers, drapers and other traders who deal in commodities that are of real value?’⁸⁰ On the morning of the vote, Eleanor Glencross complained that ‘We cannot buy meat after 5.30 ... why should the sellers of drink ... have a concession denied to other tradesmen?’⁸¹ This shrewd argument not only played on the fear of intemperance but also on the resentment of other trades; butchers, bakers, drapers and grocers could all be relied on to support the six o’clock closing of hotels.⁸²

Secondly, the temperance campaign continually addressed the impact that later closing would have on workers in the liquor trade. Their arguments in this area drew on concepts of workers’ rights and equality, and in some cases, seemed to ally themselves with trade unions and liquor industry workers. It was a clever tactic on behalf of the temperance movement as union membership was at a peak Australia-wide, with around 60 per cent of the workforce holding union membership.⁸³ This was a large audience of people, primarily working class men. As a group, they were least likely to be empathetic to the moral reasons for maintaining six o’clock closing. However, they would be receptive to labour issues. Commentary on the referendum in the *The Methodist* draws stark attention to the need to protect workers. They claimed, ‘... one ought not to sanction proposals which mean longer hours of labour, and less time for leisure, for any section of workers. Real comradeship implies, as far as possible, equality of social amenities.’⁸⁴ Temperance advertising in *The Australian Worker*, the official newspaper of the Australian Worker’s Union, demonstrates how temperance forces adopted a labour-oriented stance. *The Australian Worker*’s editorial stance was neutral in the lead up to the referendum and published advertisements from both the Liquor Trades Council and the Temperance Alliance. One strongly worded Alliance advertisement, published in December

⁸⁰ ‘A People’s Question’, *Camden News*, 13 February 1947, 1.

⁸¹ ‘More Readers’ Views on the Referendum’, *SMH*, 15 February 1947, 2.

⁸² Phillips, “‘Six o’clock swill””, 266.

⁸³ Bowden, ‘The Rise and Decline of Australian Unionism’, 63. Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, *Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1946-1947*, ed. Roland Wilson, vol. 37 (Canberra: L.F. Johnston, Commonwealth Government Printer, 1949), 510.

⁸⁴ ‘Methodism Speaks on Social Questions’, *The Methodist*, 25 January 1947, 4.

1946, cried, ‘Don’t Scab on Your Mates. **You** believe in shorter hours.’⁸⁵ [Fig 4] In the mid-twentieth century, the word ‘scab’ was more politically and emotionally charged than it is today, carrying connotations of shame and disgust. To be a scab was to be a traitor.⁸⁶ In utilising this pejorative term, the Alliance was bluntly advising workers to support six o’clock closing and was doing so in a publication for workers, not in temperance literature.

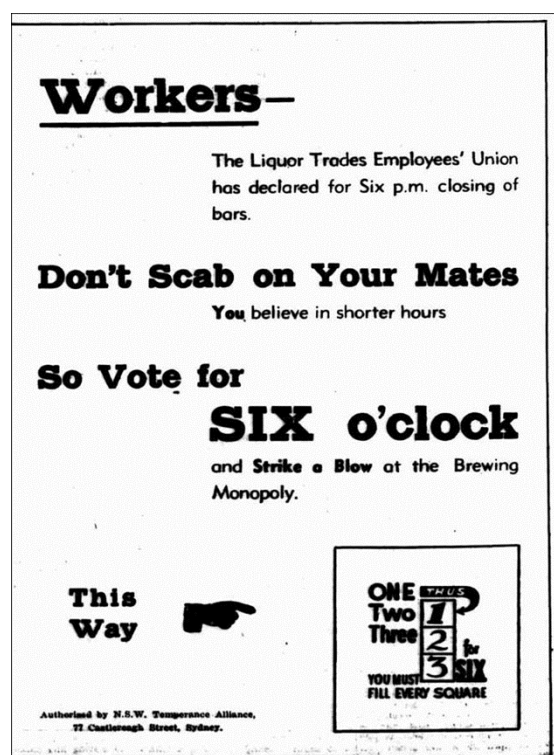


Figure 4: ‘Advertising’, N.S.W. Temperance Alliance, Advertisement, *The Australian Worker*, 11 December 1946, 6.

The Working Man for Six O’clock

Union members were the group that was arguably most affected by restrictive liquor legislation that led to the ‘six o’clock swill’. They were overwhelmingly male and working class. Arguments about the (male) worker’s right to a drink at the end of the day had been

⁸⁵ ‘Advertising’, N.S.W. Temperance Alliance, Advertisement, *The Australian Worker*, 11 December 1946, 6.

⁸⁶ Stephanie Ann Smith, *Household Words: bloomers, sucker, bombshell, scab, nigger, cyber* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 100.

circulating for several years prior to the referendum, and concepts of leisure, citizenship and the rights of the white working man found their way into public debate surrounding closing hours during World War Two.⁸⁷ The attitude of unions in relation to the extension of trading hours is interesting. Richard Waterhouse has suggested that the reduction of working hours was one element in the increasing domestication of Australian society. By campaigning for reduced working hours the labour movement ensured the adoption of a 'respectable' culture by the working classes.⁸⁸ Certainly, union arguments in the lead up to the referendum reflect the acceptance of ideals of moderation, respectability and thrift by a traditionally masculinist group.

Union support for six o'clock closing was led by the Liquor Trades Employees Union (LTEU), which represented employees in both manufacturing and front-of-house roles. Traditionally, women were under-represented in the union movement and the masculine ideals of fraternity and male solidarity have permeated the structure, culture and operation of unions in Australia.⁸⁹ However, it is interesting to note that in 1947 female membership of unions in the Food, Drinks and Narcotics industry was 43 per cent. Numerically, female membership of these unions ranked second behind the clothing industry for female membership.⁹⁰ Given women's employment opportunities in the liquor industry, generally as barmaids, it is unsurprising that membership was so high. What impact this may have had on the union stance is unknown, but the *Sydney Morning Herald's* 'Column 8' suggested that at the very least Sydney barmaids were '... whispering advice to customers to vote for 6 p.m. They are members of the Liquor Trades Employees Union.'⁹¹

⁸⁷ Luckins, 'Pigs, hogs and Aussie blokes,' 08.9.

⁸⁸ Waterhouse, *Private pleasures, public leisure*, 83.

⁸⁹ Barbara Pocock, 'Women in Unions: What Progress in South Australia?', *Journal of Industrial Relations* 37, no. 1 (1995): 4-5.

⁹⁰ Bureau of Statistics and Economics, *The Official Year Book of New South Wales. No. 51. 1947-1948.*, ed. S.R. Carver (Sydney: The Government of New South Wales, 1950), 715.

⁹¹ 'Column 8', *SMH*, 24 January 1947, 1.

The concept of drinking as a leisure activity was central to the argument of many voters who supported the extension of trading hours. While middle-class temperance groups could be relied upon to condemn the idea of drinking as a form of leisure, given the perception of working-class drinking habits, there was also strong union-led criticism of the idea of leisurely drinking. This approbation was largely because later closing would impact on the leisure time of workers in the liquor trade. The LTEU truly believed that ‘extension of the hours operating at present would be a worsening of the conditions of employees in the liquor industry.’ They also pointed out that the ‘policy of organised labour at present is a shortening of the working week to 40 hours, and also curtailment of the retail trading hours of business.’⁹² In an advertisement placed in *The Sun* the day before the vote, they asked voters to ‘Stick to Union Principles!’ Voters could do this by voting ‘against 10’clock [sic]’. In doing so, they would be voting against extended hours and split shifts, which were against union principles.⁹³ Clearly, to the LTEU, there was an ideological clash between the labour movement and the proposed extension of hours, despite any perceived need for the provision of leisurely drinking.

The LTEU was not as prolific in public advertising as temperance forces. What they did do, however, was distribute a letter outlining the Union’s position and requesting support for six o’clock closing to various groups and organisations. In early 1947, both the Thirroul and Barrier District branches of the Australian Labor Party (ALP) advertised that they had received a letter requesting support from the Liquor Trades Employees Union. They, amongst other local ALP branches, confirmed that they would unanimously support the Union in its campaign for six o’clock based on union principles.⁹⁴ The ALP Central Executive confirmed that despite the introduction of the Liquor (Amendment) Bill to parliament by a Labor

⁹² ‘Six O’Clock Closing. Workers’ Support’, *SMH*, 14 November 1946, 1.

⁹³ ‘Advertising’, Liquor Trades Employees Union, Advertisement, *The Sun*, 14 February 1947, 5.

⁹⁴ See ‘Thirroul A.L.P.’, *Illawarra Mercury*, 14 February 1947, 6; ‘Liquor Referendum’, *Barrier Daily Truth*, 28 January 1947, 3; ‘A.L.P. Branch Votes for 6 p.m. Closing’, *Newcastle Morning Herald*, 22 January 1947, 4; ‘Vale A.L.P. Against Extended Liquor Hours’, *Lithgow Mercury*, 17 January 1947, 5.

government, the official policy of the party was neutrality and the party promised a non-political vote.⁹⁵ It seems unsurprising that given their ideological similarities and support base the LTEU would reach out to ALP branches. As there was no official ALP stance on the referendum, union influence evidently gained traction with party members.

What is more surprising is that the LTEU sent their letter to temperance groups. The Newcastle United Churches' Association Liquor Campaign Committee included a copy of the letter in an advertisement entitled 'An Appeal to Trade Unionists'. The letter, addressed to Rev. E. F. Heather, stated 'The members of the above Union have decided unanimously to oppose in the forthcoming Referendum any extension of the hours of hotels, and make this appeal to you with confidence that you will support them in their efforts.'⁹⁶ The letter went on to address the fact that hotel workers should not be asked to sacrifice conditions that other workers enjoyed. One claim, in particular, addressed domestic concerns. The letter stated:

Should the voting be in favour of an extension of hours to 10 p.m., it will mean that hotel workers will be working every night with the exception of their night off until 10.30 p.m., including Saturday, and as many of these employees live in outlying suburbs, it will be nearly midnight before they reach their homes.⁹⁷

Here, the Union was drawing on ideas of domesticity and leisure associated with the adoption of the 'suburban ideal' by the working classes (note the reference to 'outlying suburbs'). The Liquor Campaign Committee addressed this in the rest of their advertisement, claiming that '6 o'clock means better conditions for liquor trade employees – their evenings free like others.' They implored voters to 'Vote and Work for 6 O'clock'.⁹⁸ It is fascinating that the LTEU sent their letter to groups which could be considered ideologically dissimilar, and certainly had different bases of support in regards to class. The Union would have been aware

⁹⁵ 'Non-political Vote Promised for Liquor Referendum', *The Sun*, 9 February 1947, 5; 'Union News and Views', *Barrier Daily Truth*, 14 January 1947, 3.

⁹⁶ 'An Appeal to Trade Unionists', Newcastle United Churches' Association Liquor Campaign Committee, Advertisement, *The Newcastle Sun*, 12 February 1947, 5.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

of temperance campaigning for the continuation of six o'clock closing, and this letter is evidence of a loose form of alliance between the two groups.

Overall, Union calls to support six o'clock found a receptive audience. The labour movement goal of shortening working hours ensured that union members voted for six. Newspaper reports from the time show that various branches of unions unaffiliated with the liquor trade supported six o'clock closing. For example, the Lithgow branch of the New South Wales Public School Teachers' Federation claimed that they supported 'the retention of six o'clock closing because we believe that such extension of hours is contrary to trade union principles.'⁹⁹ Multiple commentators in the press pointed out the hypocrisy of any union member supporting the extension of hotel trading hours. One letter in *The Bulletin* even suggested that the responsibility for any extension of hours would 'be on the heads of unionists, who make up the bulk of the voters and whose eternal cry is for better conditions.'¹⁰⁰ Union members also joined the public debate. 'Unionist', who had a letter published in the *Newcastle Morning Herald*, stated that 'Workers should be consistent, and, for the sake of their wives and children, vote the card 1, 2, 3 from the top.' Once again, union opinion on early closing was linked to the ideals of home life, that working men (and women) needed time to enjoy the pleasures of domesticity.

The LTEU was confident that their support of six o'clock would ensure that early closing would continue. In an interview on the eve of the election, Mr F. E. Connor, Secretary of the Union pointed out that the majority of hotel workers in Sydney were members of the LTEU, and he felt, given the response from workers and others concerned with the industrial implications of the vote, that six o'clock closing would be maintained with a majority of about 60 per cent.¹⁰¹ His prediction came extraordinarily close. Sixty-two per cent of the

⁹⁹ 'Liquor Referendum To-morrow', *Lithgow Mercury*, 14 February 1947, 1.

¹⁰⁰ 'Time, Gents!', *The Bulletin*, 25 December 1946, 34.

¹⁰¹ 'Liquor Referendum Saturday', *Barrier Miner*, February 13, 1947, 3.

public voted for six o'clock.¹⁰²

A Changing Drinking Culture

On January 1 1955, for the first time in 37 years, New South Wales' hotels legally remained open beyond six pm. The opening hours had been changed as a result of another referendum, which was held in response to the findings of the Royal Commission on Liquor Laws in New South Wales. The findings of the Royal Commission, which undertook its work from 1951 to 1954, served to allay some of the anxieties that surrounded the prospect of extended trading hours, especially in regards to the liquor trade and gendered drinking practices. The findings of the Royal Commission shed light on how the liquor industry in New South Wales was functioning to the detriment of public interest. Not only did the Commission find 'irregularities' in the distribution of liquor, including after-hours trading in the black market, it confirmed that there were 'evils associated with 6 o'clock closing which ought not to be tolerated in a civilised community.'¹⁰³ The damning report reflected the opinions of the wider community, which had been subjected to drinking under those 'deplorable' conditions and provided recommendations on how to overhaul the liquor industry.¹⁰⁴

The Royal Commission was successful in attenuating the moral arguments of temperance campaigners, juxtaposing their objections to alcohol consumption against the realities of modern drinking culture. In regards to six o'clock closing the Royal Commission heard evidence 'on behalf of varied interests', notably on behalf of the Temperance Alliance and various churches. In his Report on the Royal Commission, which was published in full in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Justice A. V. Maxwell revealed the specious arguments of temperance supporters. Many temperance supporters denied the existence of the 'six o'clock

¹⁰² Bureau of Statistics and Economics, *The Official Year Book of New South Wales. No. 50. 1945-1946.*, ed. S.R. Carver (Sydney: The Government of New South Wales, 1948), 894.

¹⁰³ A V Maxwell, 'Report of the Royal Commission on Liquor Laws in New South Wales', (Sydney: A H Pettifer Government Printer, 1954), 87.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

rush', with one claiming 'there is not much wrong with it'. Still others were vehement in their support for total prohibition after claiming there were no 'evils connected with six o'clock closing.'¹⁰⁵ The publication of this testimony highlighted the incongruity of temperance arguments and the public was all too aware of the 'evils' of early closing. As Maxwell stated, temperance opinion on closing hours 'loses much force if, in fact, the witness would if possible close hotels altogether.'¹⁰⁶ The findings and recommendations of the Royal Commission marked the beginning of a more permissive drinking culture in New South Wales. Not only did they lead the Government to enact drastic changes to liquor legislation in a bid to address the conduct of the liquor industry, they also led to another referendum on closing hours. The referendum, held in November 1954, saw the public vote for 10 o'clock closing by a slim majority.

Conclusion

On the surface, public support for six o'clock closing in 1947 seems curious. Early closing had dramatically and detrimentally impacted drinking culture, causing a multitude of social issues, notably the 'six o'clock swill'. However, when given the opportunity, residents of New South Wales opted to continue restrictive liquor legislation. The culture of restraint, which emphasised decency, moderation, security and industry proved remarkably influential in the outcome of the 1947 referendum. Examination of public discourse in the campaign to retain six o'clock closing reveals the proliferation of the ideology of restraint in society at the time, and surprising parallels in the arguments forwarded by two seemingly disparate groups – the temperance movement and the union movement.

The wider public debate reveals that the people of New South Wales were profoundly conflicted about the place of alcohol in their society. The public was angry with the liquor industry for its role in the creation of sexually-segregated binge drinking practices and its

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 75-79.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

behaviour during the Second World War. People were also concerned with the protection of the home and the need for more ‘cosmopolitan’ drinking practices. All of these concerns were underpinned by mid-century notions of respectability and restraint.

Despite low membership numbers, the temperance movement was vociferous in the referendum debate. While still relying on notions of domesticity and protection of the home and family to forward their cause, they also attempted to appeal to working class drinkers by allying themselves with the union movement. They diversified their argument to address public anxieties surrounding the liquor industry, thereby appealing to the wider public. Given their positions on opposite sides of the divide in relation to gender and class, temperance campaigners adopted arguments that addressed workers’ rights and drew on mid-century ideals of masculinity, egalitarianism, and mateship in their bid to ‘keep it to six’.

Conversely, while primarily approaching their support of six o’clock closing within a labour context, unions also addressed anxieties surrounding respectability and domesticity in their campaign and allied themselves with the temperance movement to achieve their aims. Given the traditional masculine narrative of the Australian pub, it is notable that virtues of thrift and restraint were so highly regarded by this traditionally masculinist group. The ultimately successful campaigns by both the temperance union and the trade union movement to maintain six o’clock closing in New South Wales reveals profound complexities surrounding drinking culture in New South Wales, particularly in regards to gender and class.