

Sobering facts: why Gen Z won't prop up old traditions

Kiara Angelini, Julia Hunt

FOR generations, a Friday night drink has been an Australian ritual. Whether it was after-work beers at the local pub, a bottle of wine over dinner or a few drinks with friends, alcohol has long been part of the country's social life.

Young people are increasingly drinking less alcohol but at a higher risk with rates of binge drinking remaining high.

20-year-old Charli Seymour decided to stop consuming alcohol after moving to Canberra for university.

"I just can't afford to drink and pay my rent and buy food. It was the thing that was going to go," Ms Seymour said.

She said her student accommodation has a strong drinking culture with students partaking in high-risk behaviours that have deterred her from drinking.

She said that her peers are not themselves when drinking: she has witnessed them punching walls and shoving people into walls in the hallway.

She decided she wanted

to socialise without being peer-pressured to consume alcohol.

For 23-year-old Australian National University student Keira Yu, not drinking has become a personal choice shaped by her culture and coming from a traditional Chinese family.

In a new city with unfamiliar streets and culture, being

far away from home means she does not feel comfortable or safe drinking, particularly at night.

"It's different because, in China I'm in a city and I'm familiar with it, and I have a lot of friends there, so I can make sure I'm safe," Ms Yu said.

She engages with Australian culture in other

ways, but for her a night out at the pub drinking alcohol is not one of them.

Sarah Chapman, a bar manager at Badger & Co, has noticed that young people are drinking less and they "typically order one drink or none at all."

Cost of living a factor

She said this may be

because of cost-of-living pressures.

Their busiest time is during happy hour and the cheapest drink is beer, which recently she has seen more women purchasing.

Though Ms Chapman has noticed there are occasional outbreaks of binge drinking.

"People prefer not to drink regularly and then have one big night where they have a lot," she said.

Generation Z is shifting to wellbeing-focused lifestyles and prioritising essential spending amidst cost-of-living pressures.

A report by The Society for the Study of Addiction found that drinking patterns still follow familiar life-stage patterns. Consumption peaked in early adulthood before declining with age.

However, Gen Z reported the lowest weekly consumption of alcohol, compared to other generations.

In fact, Gen Z were 18 to 20 times more likely to abstain entirely from alcohol than older generations.

The study pointed to a range of factors that could be driving Gen Z drinking habits, including greater aware-

ness of health risks, cost-of-living pressures, and the rise of non-alcoholic drinks.

Katherine Berney director at The Foundation for Alcohol and Education (FARE), said legislation on the licensing of alcohol was "brought in for a reason, and what we saw was a reduction in violence in public areas."

Ms Berney said she welcomes younger people choosing healthier lifestyles, and reducing their alcohol intake, although is concerned that young people are drinking at more high-risk levels.

Almost seven in 10 23-year-olds reported binge drinking in the past year.

She said the increase in binge drinking poses a risk of increasing rates of violence, in public settings and inside the home, with alcohol being more readily accessible through delivery services.

Alcohol is involved in up to 47 per cent of police-reported family violence incidents.

Ms Berney said, "Alcohol doesn't cause violence, but it does create environments where that violence can be accelerated and also the severity."



Student Charli Seymour who doesn't drink to save money. Picture by Karleen Minney

FACILITIES Late nights, Sundays will be gone in the ACT

Date set for cuts to library branch hours

Jasper Lindell

SUNDAY and late-night public library hours will be cut from the end of next month as the ACT government pushes ahead with changes that will also reduce the number of branches open outside of business hours despite community pushback.

Libraries ACT on Thursday said its branches' hours would change from August 27 following an announce-

ment in June of planned changes to the way libraries operated, after an independent review of the territory's public library system.

The critical review identified inefficient staffing and other dysfunction in the library system as the cause of frequent unplanned branch closures.

Greens deputy leader Andrew Braddock condemned the cuts as a backwards step for the community and called

on the government to change course. "I'd encourage anyone to go to the library on a weekend. For example, I was at Kippax just the other day on a Saturday and there was over 90 people, parents and children, attending the giggle-and-wiggle session and that shows the value of these community libraries have for Canberrans and why they need to remain open," Mr Braddock told *The Canberra Times*.

City Services Minister Tara Cheyne, who is responsible for the library system, said the changes were designed to deliver a reliable library service and solve the problem of more than 100 unplanned branch closures caused by inflexible and outdated rosters.

"The rostering model has been informed by the opening hours and the opening hours has been informed again by staff input, by visi-

tion data, and how people are using our libraries to support ultimately a sustainable model," Ms Cheyne told budget estimates this week.

The Kippax branch in West Belconnen will no longer open on Saturdays under the changes. Civic and Erindale will also now be closed at the weekends.

The Belconnen, Woden, Dickson, Gungahlin and Tuggeranong branches will open from 9am to 5pm,

Monday to Saturday. The five town-centre branches previously opened from 10am to 4pm on Saturday and from noon to 4pm on Sundays.

The five branches with Sunday hours averaged 96 visitors an hour with 1920 attendees across the sites, budget estimates heard this week. Sixty-three of 66 staff voted on the change to the roster, with 34 supporting the change, 28 voting against it and one ineligible vote.

ST GREGORY'S COLLEGE

100 Badgally Road, Gregory Hills NSW 2557



100 years
1926-2026

Educating students with strong minds and gentle hearts

Since 1926, St Gregory's College has nurtured students in a true rural boarding environment, set on over 300 acres of land, less than an hour from Sydney.

With exceptional academic, agricultural, and sporting programs, our students thrive in a supportive and connected community.

Book a Tour
www.stgregs.nsw.edu.au



Kindergarten - Year 6 | Co-educational - Day students
Year 7 - 12 | Boys - Day and Boarding students

