

## Alcohol and temperance to the 1830s

### The magnificent thirst

The convicts, military and officials who started the colony of New South Wales in 1788 came from a society in which drinking was almost universal and the pub was central to everyday life. In 1792, Governor Arthur Phillip (1788-1792) issued the first liquor licences in a vain attempt to curb the booming trade in smuggled rum. During the early years, coins were scarce, and in a growing economy, rum was used as a substitute currency. Officers often paid their workers in rum<sup>1</sup>.

Maximum alcohol consumption was in the late 1830s, when liquor was widely available and pubs opened to midnight<sup>2</sup>. Until the 1860s, Australians drank considerably more alcohol than the British, particularly spirits. In the 1830s, spirit drinking was four times as high as Britain, mostly as rum, brandy or gin, when the annual consumption was an estimated 13.6 litres per head (compared with an all-time low of 2 litres per head during the Great Depression of the 1890s)<sup>3</sup>. Eighty percent of the 80,000-odd convicts who arrived in New South Wales between 1788 and 1840 were men, and this high proportion of single men was probably one reason for the enormous drinking levels<sup>4</sup>.

Successive Governors tried and failed to control this trade. The Tasmanian Lieutenant Governor Sir John Franklin (1837-1843) banned the distillation of spirits in 1838, and the New South Wales Governor Sir George Gipps (1837-1846) stopped issuing rum to the imperial troops while also imposing an increased excise on spirits.

### The rise and decline of the early temperance movement

The temperance movement was an international, organised and popular campaign against alcohol, which was widely seen as the root cause of social ills. It was the largest social movement of the nineteenth century. In the early days of the movement, alcohol problems were seen as an individual's choice, and the approach was to persuade problem drinkers to improve themselves. The early advocates promoted moderation rather than abstinence, although drinkers were encouraged to pledge abstinence<sup>5</sup>.



Figure 1 Temperance campaigners (wallsviews.com website)

A preliminary meeting of the New South Wales Temperance Society was held in October 1833, chaired by William Pascoe Crook, a Congregationalist minister. By the end of the year, the Society had secured Chief Justice Francis Forbes as President. The society's initial rules required members to pledge to relinquish spirits and avoid an excess of other alcoholic beverages. The annual meeting in 1838 was chaired by the new Governor Sir George Gipps, who signed the pledge before delivering a speech arguing that a great portion of the crimes and vices in the colony could be traced to the excessive use of ardent spirits. This was the first public meeting of any kind chaired by a Governor<sup>6</sup>.



**Figure 2 Melbourne Total Abstinence Society (Museums Victoria)**

Within a few years, large numbers of men and women were joining temperance groups in Sydney, Melbourne and Launceston. As in the United States and Britain, temperance societies of the 1830s often confined their efforts to eliminating the drinking of spirits. Temperance societies organised public lectures (thought to be the first lecture of any kind in Melbourne) and issued their own magazines to publicise the cause<sup>7</sup>. The first teetotal society, the Australian Total Abstinence Society was founded in September 1838. It grew rapidly with a membership drawn from a broader cross section of society than the existing temperance groups. The teetotal pledge demanded complete abstinence from all alcohol.

But signs of the divisions that would lead to decline in the movement were already present in the early 1840s. As the abstinence societies grew, support for the Temperance Society declined. In New South Wales, personal animosities led to a fracturing of the movement, and by 1843 there were four separate teetotal societies competing for support, and divided in approach. The early temperance movement declined in the mid-1840s following internal dissent, lack of funds during the severe economic depression, and by Governor Gipps' departure in 1846. Almost all of Sydney's temperance societies ceased to operate in the decade after 1845. *The Herald* in 1853 contrasted the thriving temperance movement in Melbourne with that of Sydney at the time<sup>8</sup>.

## The resurgence of temperance in the 1850s

### A change of direction

The end of the 1840s depression and the gold discoveries of the early 1850s led to greater prosperity, increased alcohol consumption, and a moral panic about the newly-rich working classes. This was fertile ground for temperance societies. Equally important was the passage in the United States of the *Maine Liquor Law* in 1851, an early version of prohibition. This legislation gave encouragement to temperance advocates in Britain and New South Wales<sup>9</sup>.

Temperance societies began to form alliances to strengthen the movement, such as the Tasmanian Temperance Alliance in 1856 and the New South Wales Alliance for the Suppression of Intemperance in 1857<sup>10</sup>. Band of Hope societies began in 1855 to indoctrinate children to the temperance cause, spreading rapidly around the colony to play an important role in the movement in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. A further development was the formation of dedicated women's societies, such as the Ladies' Total Abstinence Society in 1856.



Figure 3 Band of Hope certificate (Museums Victoria)

During this period, there was a change of emphasis towards lobbying for government action to ban or at least better regulate the sale and consumption of alcohol. The resort to legislation was justified by claims that the voluntary abstinence principle had failed, and the hotels had created twenty new drunks for every one saved by the temperance societies<sup>11</sup>. To mark the temperance resurgence in New South Wales, an imposing Temperance Hall was constructed in Pitt Street in 1858<sup>12</sup>.

The *Australian Home Companion and Band of Hope Journal* was published in Sydney from 1856 to 1861 to promote temperance. In 1857, the *Journal* reported on a three-day conference in Melbourne of delegates from the various temperance societies, who met to form an alliance of their societies. They also proposed sending petitions to Parliament, with accompanying statistics, advocating the supervision of public houses and opposing the appointment of persons in the alcohol trade as magistrates. The conference also discussed the formation of Bands of Hope in Victoria<sup>13</sup>.

## Temperance movements go international

Major international temperance organisations established Australian branches during this time. The Independent Order of Rechabites arrived in 1847, followed by the Sons of Temperance. The Order of Good Templars set up their first branch in Queensland in 1872. Between them, these bodies had 63,000 Australian members by 1890.



Figure 4 Temperance Hall Sydney, 1870 (State Records of NSW)

Evangelical missionaries boosted the temperance cause, such as Matthew Burnett (1839-1896) from Yorkshire, who travelled the country for over twenty years from 1863 conducting loud, flamboyant religious revival meetings, stressing that total abstinence was essential to a good Christian life. These evangelists forged a close link between the temperance movement and the non-conformist Protestant churches, such as Wesleyan Methodists, Baptists and Presbyterians, which by the late 1880s came to dominate the Australian temperance campaigns. Roman Catholics and Anglicans had their own temperance societies, but they were not very visible in the agitation for anti-liquor laws. In fact, the Church of England tended towards moderation rather than total abstinence<sup>14</sup>.

In 1882, the Sydney Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) was formed by Eli Johnson, a visiting American temperance lecturer. Other local Temperance Union branches were formed in Sydney and country areas from 1884. Then in 1890, the Women's Christian Temperance Union of New South Wales was established to embrace the whole colony<sup>15</sup>. While temperance meetings were initially chaired by men, and frequently addressed by invited male speakers, they heralded the female dominance of the temperance movement that continued well into the twentieth century. By pushing women to the forefront of temperance, the WCTU played a critical role in securing a political voice for women in Australia society<sup>16</sup>.

There was good cause for the concerns of these groups: by 1873, there were 2,400 licensed hotels in New South Wales in a population of 540,000 (that is, one pub per 225 of population). The 1870s was also the great decade of pub building in the inner suburbs of Sydney, when most of the buildings

documented in this history were constructed. The temperance societies were stepping up their campaigns to ban the sale of alcohol, and hotel keepers were starting to feel the heat. The United Licensed Victuallers' Association was established that year by hotel owners to form a united front in order to combat the threat to their livelihood from temperance advocates<sup>17</sup>.

Another impact of the temperance movement was that in the 1880s a significant number of hotels around the country were either purpose-built as or converted to coffee palaces, where no alcohol was served. When the influence of the temperance movement faded, most of these hotels either applied for liquor licences or were demolished.



## Alcohol regulation from the 1870s

### The first Local Option – inefficient and expensive

Temperance alliances were among the most successful lobby groups in colonial politics. They eventually won the right to the Local Option, a policy in which each electorate could vote to increase or decrease its number of licensed premises<sup>18</sup>. The push for a Local Option began in the 1860s, but it was not until the 1880 Temperance Convention that Local Option Alliances were formed to petition State Governments in a more organised way. Queensland introduced local veto in 1885. The proposed national capital in Canberra was founded in 1913 as a prohibition city, but this was overturned by popular vote in 1928. 1870 legislation in Victoria allowed a municipality to object to new liquor licences based on the number of existing licences<sup>19</sup>.

1886 liquor legislation in Victoria introduced a statutory limit of hotels in each district and no licences would be granted above the limit. The number of licences could be reduced or increased to the limit if a local opinion poll supported this. But this was considered inefficient and unwieldy after 168 polls produced only 217 hotel closures over the twenty years to 1906, costing the State's taxpayers £212,771 in compensation. By comparison, during this time 513 hotels died a natural death in Victoria. The number of hotels closed by Local Option was constrained by the extravagant compensation paid out of a fund that was very limited. The Government had to refuse a number of petitions for closure under the Local Option due to the fund running out.

In New South Wales, Henry Parkes' *Licensing Act 1882* was a success for the temperance movement. It included a limited form of Local Option, in which each electorate could vote to veto any new licences. The Local Option would be exercised during general elections, which further politicised the issue of alcohol consumption by mobilising temperance forces during election campaigns<sup>20</sup>.

### Stricter Local Option in New South Wales

In June 1934, during efforts to restore the Local Option in New South Wales, Mr. W. S. Arnott, a former chairman of the Licences Reduction Board, outlined the history of the Local Option in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. The following information is largely taken from this article. The New South Wales *Liquor (Amendment) Act 1905* stipulated that a vote of electors on the question of Local Option was to be taken in every electorate at each general election, starting at the next one, and with no end date specified. The choices were:

- (a) That the number of existing licences be continued.
- (b) That the number of existing licences be reduced.
- (c) That no licences be granted in the electorate.

Resolutions (a) and (b) required a simple majority to be effective, but (c) required a 60% majority. The Act also required that at least 30% of the electors voted for the resolution. If (b) was carried, the number of licences in the electorate could be reduced to 75% of the existing number. If (c) was carried, all licences of every type were to be cancelled after three years. The statewide voting for the three polls was:

- 1907: continuance 206,844, reduction 74,868, no licences 175, 984.
- 1910: continuance 324,861, reduction 37,825, no licences 216,523.
- 1913: continuance 382,223, reduction 44,805, no licences 246,435.

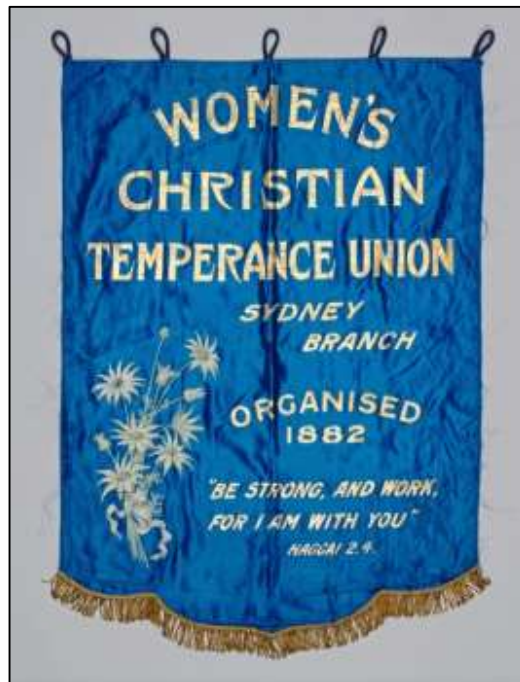


Figure 5 Sydney WCTU banner (Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences)

If “no licences” was not carried (as was the case in all three elections), the votes for no licences were added to those of reduction and treated as reduction votes. While the overall voting in the State was always for continuance of existing licences, some electorates voted in favour of reduction of licences. In the 1907 election, reduction was carried in 64 of the 90 electorates then existing. In 1910, only 14 electorates carried reduction, and in 1913 the position was similar when 15 electorates carried reduction. As a result, the Reduction Courts closed many licensed houses:

- In 1907, 293 hotels and 46 wine licences.
- In 1910, 28 hotels and 5 wine licences.
- In 1913, 23 hotels and 7 wine licences.

But a major problem was how to compensate closed hotels. The State governments would have to foot the bill, which Victorian Premier Thomas Bent estimated in 1905 to be “a couple of million pounds” if his Government closed all the hotels they were entitled to<sup>21</sup>. In New South Wales, no financial compensation was paid to owners or licensees of closed hotels and wine licences: the Act



provided for time compensation only, which varied according to circumstances from one year to eight years. Hotels with two licence convictions were allowed to remain open for one more year, and those with one conviction were allowed two years. Longer periods were set for hotels in which owners were also licensees (eight years), and where hotels with no licensing convictions were closed to make up the desired reduction of 25% (three to eight years).

Another awkward problem with Local Option was that in nearly all the congested and industrial areas around Sydney, such as Darling Harbour, Surry Hills and Woolloomooloo, the electors always voted to continue the existing number of licences. However, the Government, church leaders and temperance advocates all thought to a man and woman that these were the very suburbs that should have the axe taken to their hotel network, but Local Option failed to achieve this. As a result, Local Option was not exercised in New South Wales after the 1913 election<sup>22</sup>.

### **Local Option and the Victorian Licences Reduction Board**

In 1904, a Local Option poll was held in North Melbourne<sup>23</sup>. The result was not deemed a success, as a very large amount of compensation was paid: £50,000 for 37 closed hotels<sup>24</sup>, and was vigorously contested in the courts, dragging the process out<sup>25</sup>. One area of complaint was that the remaining 57 hotels in North Melbourne would inherit almost all of the customers of the closed hotels, greatly benefiting their businesses, even though the payouts to closed hotels had not cost them a penny. Even worse, the reduction in pubs had not resulted in any discernible reduction in drinking (which was meant to be the point of the exercise)<sup>26</sup>.

Discussion followed on whether a system without any financial compensation would be better, for example a time compensation in which hotels were given up to ten years to close. The liquor trade (represented by the Liquor Trades Defence Union) favoured financial compensation, but the temperance alliance favoured the time compensation method, probably because this much cheaper method would be easier to get through Parliament and would not have to wait for sufficient funds to be accumulated before hotels could be closed.

This led the Victorian Government to legislate a better way of getting rid of unwanted hotels<sup>27</sup>. While making the case in Parliament for a more effective system, the Victorian Attorney-General pointed out that when the first *Licensing Act* was passed in 1885, there were 4,256 hotels in the State, which was 2,451 over the statutory limit of 1,814<sup>28</sup>. This was at a time when the Victorian population (after the 1881 census) was just over 862,000<sup>29</sup>, meaning there was one hotel for every 202 Victorians, or one for every 106 males – so many that the entire male population of the State could almost be squeezed into all of them at once! But since 1885, only 217 had been closed under Local Option, at a cost of £212,771.

The resultant *Licensing Act 1906* in August 1906 postponed Local Option polls for ten years to 1916 (later delayed to 1920)<sup>30</sup>, and established a Licences Reduction Board to close hotels more effectively and award compensation using fees collected from all hotels. The Board would operate for ten years, after which the Local Option was expected to return, running polls on general election dates. The Board would deal with all matters pertaining to liquor licences, including licence transfers. The three Board members were all licensing magistrates<sup>31</sup>.

Most of the early years were concentrated in the inner city areas of Collingwood, Richmond, Fitzroy and South Melbourne. By January 1910, some 311 hotels had been closed in Victoria and over

£140,000 paid in compensation. The suburbs further out, such as Prahran, South Yarra, Windsor and St Kilda had fewer hotels and were not examined until the 1920s. The Victorian Board effectively wound up around 1930, after some 477 hotels had been closed in the metropolitan area, and 1,149 in the country, with a total compensation payout of just under £1,100,000<sup>32</sup>. A statewide Victorian opinion poll in 1920 created two dry zones (which remain in place in a residual form today), and closed around 200 hotels<sup>33</sup>.

### Early closing in 1916

The temperance movement's greatest success in Australia came in 1916 with the introduction of six o'clock closing. At a time when there were calls for wartime austerity, campaigners seized on a drunken riot among soldiers training for the front and persuaded the New South Wales Government to hold a referendum on closing hours in June 1916, which invited electors to select a closing time of either six, seven, eight or nine o'clock. A majority voted for the earliest given hour (nine o'clock was second with around half as many votes). Six o'clock closing began with the passing of the *Early Closing Act 1916*. South Australia, Victoria and Tasmania also adopted six o'clock closing, Western Australia nine o'clock and Queensland changed to eight o'clock closing in 1923.



Figure 6 Early closing referendum, 1916 (City of Sydney Archives)

The real impact of early closing became clear after the end of World War 1, when the troops returned and went back to work. Most workers finished work at five o'clock, giving them one hour to consume as much alcohol as possible before six o'clock closing. The frenzied nature of this one-hour binge each day became known as the six o'clock swill. Sly grog shops proliferated and crime flourished during the 1920s. Respectable women avoided the public bar and all women were increasingly excluded from it. The front bar became a male space, although until World War II this was more by custom than by law. Women were finally forced into dedicated Ladies' Lounges<sup>34</sup>.



Figure 7 The six o'clock swill in Melbourne (*Herald Sun*)

### **The American experience**

From 1906, the Anti-Saloon League ran a determined campaign in the United States to ban the sale of alcohol at a State level. League members led speeches, advertisements and public demonstrations, claiming that banning alcohol would eliminate poverty and social issues such as immoral behaviour and violence. They proclaimed that families would be happier and the world would be a better place. Other influential groups, such as the WCTU, also began to lobby for a ban on the sale, manufacture and distribution of all alcoholic beverages.

Many State legislatures bowed to this pressure by enacting statewide prohibition. In December 1917, the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the United States Constitution established the prohibition of “intoxicating liquors” in the United States. Specifically, the Amendment declared the production, transport and sale of intoxicating liquors illegal, although it did not outlaw the actual consumption of alcohol. National prohibition began on 17 January 1920, one year after ratification by Congress.



Figure 8 Liquor raid in New York City, 1922

Although the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment initially heralded a decline in alcohol consumption, nationwide enforcement of prohibition proved to be difficult, particularly in cities. Organised crime and other groups engaged in large-scale bootlegging, and illegal speakeasies became popular in many areas. Supporters of prohibition wondered what they had unleashed when faced with levels of civil disobedience unheard-of among respectable citizens who resented their perfectly responsible consumption of liquor being denied them by a bunch of wild-eyed temperance zealots.

People who could afford the highly-priced smuggled liquor flocked to speakeasies and gin joints. These places could be quite glamorous, with women being welcomed for the first time, to drink cocktails, smoke and dance to jazz. Working class consumption largely moved from the saloons to the home. "Bathtub gin" and moonshine took the place of mass-produced liquor. Americans found ways to distil alcohol from perfume, paint and carpentry supplies. This continued even after it became known that many of these products contained poisons intended to deter such misuse.

Very few illegal liquor distillers were ever successfully prosecuted, or even arrested. When a liquor seller ended up on trial, juries filled with sympathetic drinkers were reluctant to find defendants guilty. Public sentiment began to turn against prohibition through the 1920s, and in 1932 the Democratic presidential nominee Franklin D. Roosevelt called for the repeal of the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment in his election platform. The 21<sup>st</sup> Amendment repealed the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment in 1933, making it the only Amendment to the Constitution to be repealed in its entirety.

### **The quest for prohibition here**

In 1916, various State temperance alliances formed a national body, the Australian Alliance Prohibition Council. By then, the temperance movement was frustrated by the lack of success of the Local Option (suspended after 1913 in New South Wales), and was setting its sights on nationwide prohibition. The passage of the *Volstead Act* in the United States, which implemented the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution, inspired hope that a similar prohibition act might be introduced in Australia<sup>35</sup>.

From the 1920s, temperance advocates persuaded governments to hold referendums into prohibition in Australia and New Zealand. None passed, although some votes came close<sup>36</sup>. The WCTU declared at its 1921 national convention that its aim was a dry Australia by 1925, but the failure of State referendums throughout the decade made this unrealistic. The Victorian referendum of 1930 recorded the highest "yes" vote at 42%. One poll in Tasmania suffered such a low voter turnout that there were even doubts about its validity.

No Australian State ever turned dry, and Local Option polls rarely even produced a dry suburb. However, one small but temporary success for prohibition advocates was in creating the new national capital in Canberra as a dry zone in 1913. But when Parliament House was completed in 1928 and the Federal Government moved there, another referendum overturned the earlier result and the ban was repealed<sup>37</sup>. One of the greatest practical arguments against prohibition was the economic one: in 1923 it was estimated that prohibition would cost the New South Wales Government more than £12.5 million to buy out the liquor industry<sup>38</sup>.

## The New South Wales Licences Reduction Board

### Setting up the Licences Reduction Board

In New South Wales, there was dissatisfaction with the Local Option, partly because of its cost to the taxpayer but also because the districts with the highest concentration of pubs were those with least interest in the temperance cause. In 1916, the Attorney-General (David Hall) said that the benefit to the temperance movement of the Local Option was not worth the effort involved, and that Parliament should be able to find an improved method of closing unwanted hotels<sup>39</sup>. Encouraged by the success of the Victorian Licences Reduction Board in 1907, the New South Wales *Liquor (Amendment) Act 1919* constituted a similar three-member Board, to operate from 1920 to 1923.

For each electorate in New South Wales, a statutory limit of hotels was calculated, based on population, and whether city or country. The Board could reduce the number of hotels to this limit, up to a 25% reduction. The statutory limit was four for each 1000 enrolled electors and 3 for each succeeding 2,000 electors in a five-member electorate, or one hotel for each 500 enrolled electors in three-member (country) electorates<sup>40</sup>. New South Wales had 24 electorates in 1920, and the statutory number was exceeded in 14 of them. There were 2,538 hotels in the State, and this could be reduced by 489<sup>41</sup>. The statutory number in the Sydney electorate was 103, and 78 of the 314 hotels could be closed (that is, about 25% of them)<sup>42</sup>. Compensation would be paid to owners and licensees, from a levy on alcohol sales by hotels.

The Board was to operate from 1 January 1920 for 3 years. Sydney Gunn, a stipendiary magistrate from Newcastle, was appointed chairman. The other appointees were Mr R. Shelton, chairman of the Forbes Land Board, and Mr. R. P. Sellors of the Public Service Board. A Compensation Board was also appointed, with Judge Hamilton as chairman, and members Mr H.M. Hawkins, principal of the firm H. W. Horning Ltd and a well-known social reformer and member of several boards, and Edwin Stooke, Secretary of the Liquor Trades Defence Association<sup>43</sup>.



Figure 9 Sydney Gunn (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 October 1922)

A public notice was issued by Mr R. Ovington, Secretary to the Board, requiring all licensees in New South Wales to furnish details of the liquor delivered to or purchased by their businesses over the

previous twelve months<sup>44</sup>. A Licensed Victuallers Compensation Fund was established to receive 3% of all liquor sales over the last twelve months, and later pay compensation to closed hotels<sup>45</sup>. The existing Licensing Court was retained, causing conflict with the Licences Reduction Board for some time. In January 1920, the members of the Board travelled to Melbourne to learn about the operation of its Victorian equivalent<sup>46</sup>.

### **The Board gets to work**

Much preparation work was required before the Board could begin to hold licence deprivation hearings. Firstly, police throughout the State compiled lists of all hotels in their local area with licence violations during the last three years to the end of 1919, then conducted inspections on all those properties, looking at whether they were well kept, were an annoyance to neighbours, were well supplied with sanitary features, and were judged to be a “convenience to the public” (a rather vague requirement that usually translated to whether there were already too many pubs nearby)<sup>47</sup>. All hotels were classified by the number of licence violations: “A” class were those with two or more violations (which would be examined by the Board first), and “B” class - those with only one violation (to be examined at a later date if the statutory limit was still exceeded by closing a number of those in the “A” class)<sup>48</sup>.

In August 1920, the Licences Reduction Board began to inspect the 314 hotels in the Sydney electorate<sup>49</sup>. By November, all of the hotels in the Sydney electorate had been inspected and sixteen hotels had been deprived of their licences, nine of them in Surry Hills<sup>50</sup>. The compensation for these hotels was announced in the *Government Gazette* the following April<sup>51</sup> and the delicensed hotels were ordered to close by 30 June 1921<sup>52</sup>. However, the New South Wales State Records files for the closed hotels showed that the hotels usually closed a few months after this<sup>53</sup>.

In January 1921, the Board moved its operations to Newcastle to hold deprivation hearings there. Then the members travelled around other country electorates<sup>54</sup>. In September 1922, the deprivation hearings resumed for more hotels in the Sydney electorate, commencing with Woolloomooloo<sup>55</sup>, followed by Surry Hills<sup>56</sup>. In October 1922, Sydney Gunn died at age 51<sup>57</sup>, and was replaced soon afterwards as chairman by the magistrate Mr F. G. Adrian<sup>58</sup>.

In November 1922, the New South Wales Government presented a *Liquor Amendment Act* to extend the term of the Board for three years from 1 July 1924. There was no mention of a prohibition referendum or changing the restriction on trading hours<sup>59</sup>. Also, the local option was suspended for a further three years. A further stipulation of the Amendment Act was that wine licences would be added to the licence reduction operations of the Board<sup>60</sup>. In December 1922, the Board announced that a further twelve Surry Hills hotels would be deprived of their licences<sup>61</sup>. Compensation hearings for this group of hotels were held in May 1923<sup>62</sup>.

By July 1923, after about three years of operation, the *Sydney Morning Herald* was reporting “good progress on the road to reform”. £430,000 had been accumulated in the compensation fund (after paying out compensation for hotels closed so far), and it was expected that at this rate it would be in credit to the extent of two to three million pounds in five years’ time<sup>63</sup>. By the middle of 1923, 25 of Surry Hills’s 62 hotels had been closed by the Board, a reduction of 40%. This was presumably the kind of result the Government and temperance advocates had been hoping for after the failure of the Local Option in the inner city, and was met with widespread approval in the press.

In July 1927, the Board handed down the last of its licence deprivation determinations in the State, and it only remained to determine compensation for the sixteen hotels closed in the Northern Tableland electorate<sup>64</sup>. In 1928, Dr. H. V. Evatt, then the State MP for Balmain, challenged the number of electors counted in 1920 in the old Balmain electorate, and claimed that the number of hotels was in fact over the statutory limit<sup>65</sup>. The Licences Reduction Board duly considered this, and subsequently closed three more hotels<sup>66</sup>.

By 1933, the work of the Licences Reduction Board had effectively finished, and at the end of that year it had closed 278 hotels statewide out of an original 2,539 in 1920 (or 11%). In total, there was a decrease in licences by 478 (nearly 19%), either by the Board, by natural attrition or by means other than the Licences Reduction Board. By then, there was one hotel for every 1241 persons, compared with one for every 803 persons in 1920<sup>67</sup>.

The upshot of all this effort was that the 3,063 licensed premises existing in New South Wales when Local Option was first legislated in 1905 had been reduced to 2,037 in 1940. That is, a reduction of 33%<sup>68</sup>. This was by a combination of Local Option reductions, the Licences Reduction Board, natural attrition, and hotels voluntarily closing.

### **Temperance campaigns after the Licences Reduction Board**

In September 1924, Archdeacon Francis Boyce and the solicitor William Clegg, both members of the New South Wales Temperance Alliance, said that the prohibition movement had gone backwards in recent years, but that steady progress (towards prohibition) was assured under the Local Option. Boyce was thankful for the work of the Licences reduction Board, but was always a believer in the value of the Local Option, and would like to see its suspension removed<sup>69</sup>. However Thomas Ley, the Minister for Justice, pointed out in Parliament that the Board had reduced licences by 224 in its first two years, whereas the Local Option had only reduced them by 158 in ten years<sup>70</sup>.

In September 1928, a referendum on prohibition in New South Wales was easily rejected by 825,965 to 333,400 after three days of counting. At the same time, a similar poll in the Australian Capital Territory voted by an absolute majority (2,218 in favour, 57 more than the total of the three other questions) to introduce licensed houses<sup>71</sup>. The *Liquor Amendment (Continuance) Act 1928* removed the suspension of the Local Option clauses and provided that they should come into operation on a date to be appointed by the Governor<sup>72</sup>. This was effectively the end of the Local Option for the foreseeable future.

Through the 1930s, the New South Wales Temperance Alliance continued to campaign for the restoration of the Local Option<sup>73</sup> and against the extension of opening hours<sup>74</sup>. The repeal of the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment in the United States to end prohibition was still being discussed in the Australian press throughout the 1930s. The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported in April 1936 on the effects of the repeal. It was thought that more people, particularly the middle class, were drinking, but it was no longer the feverish business it was when it was a forbidden pastime, so there was less drunkenness. There was less bootlegging and smuggling from abroad, the price of liquor had fallen and the quality had improved<sup>75</sup>.

One news item related to the theme of drinking and drunkenness in an era before random breath testing: in 1937 a Police Magistrate in Melbourne suggested the use of the phrase “the Leith police dismisseth us” to determine sobriety. Mr Roberts of the Victorian Local Option League was asked

what he thought of the new test. Mr Roberts (who we must assume was perfectly sober) negotiated the tongue twister carefully and successfully the first time, but when asked to say it faster, could not get it right. The versatile Roberts (who we must also assume was Welsh) then demonstrated his tongue-twisting dexterity with by smoothly rattling off the name of the Welsh railway station Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwlllantysiliogogoch! However, Dr. Robertson of the Health Commission was not impressed by linguistic accuracy in determining sobriety, and said that the only reliable test was a blood test, but the police headquarters did not have facilities for taking it<sup>76</sup>.



# The hotel closures in Surry Hills

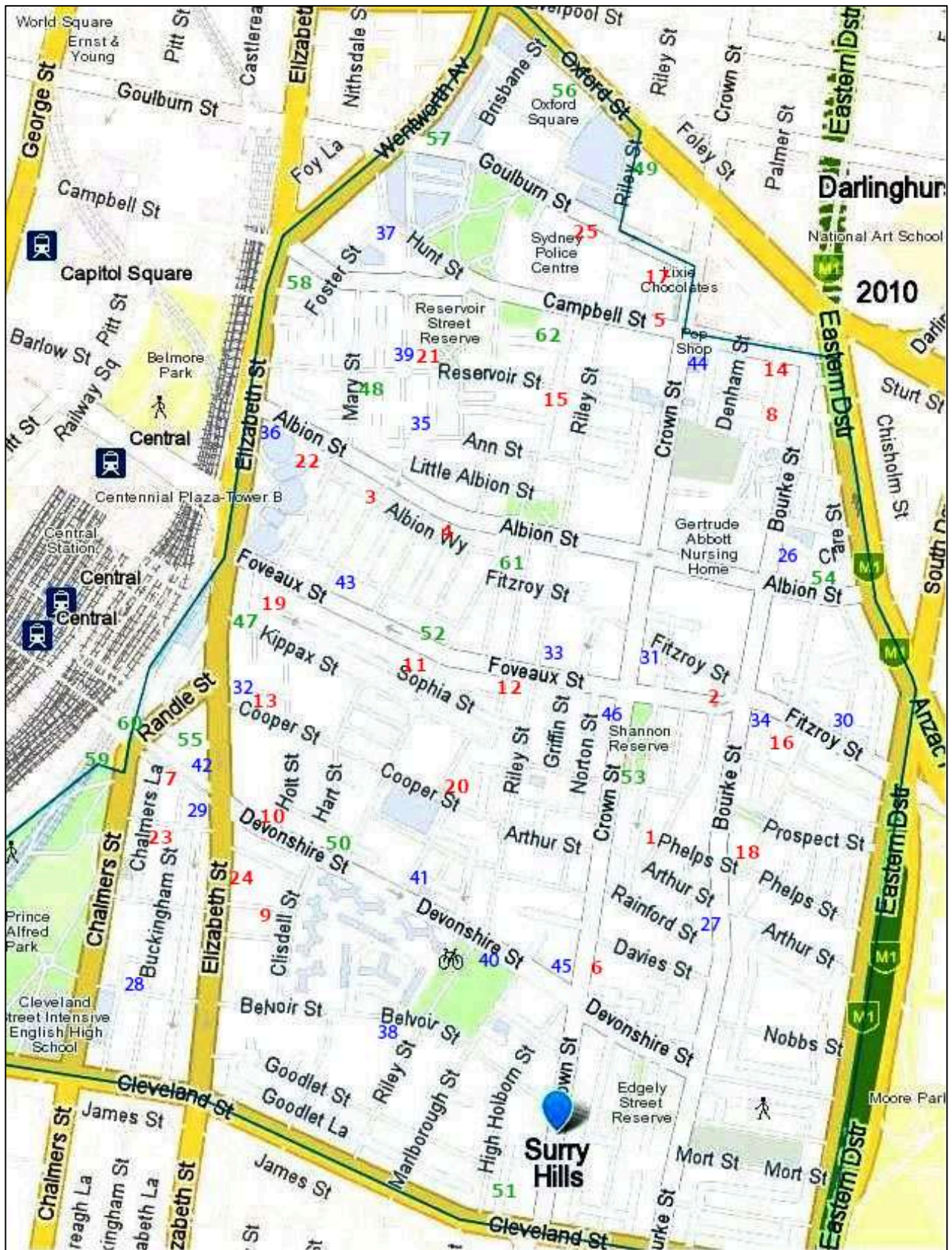


Figure 10 Surry Hills hotels in 1920 - see tables below for details

**Surry Hills hotels closed by the Licences Reduction Board:**

	<b>Hotel name</b>	<b>Hotel address</b>	<b>Date closed</b>
1	Athletic Club	46-48 Arthur Street	15/12/1923
2	Austral Hotel	477 Bourke Street, corner Fitzroy St	1/12/1923
3	Club Hotel	47 Albion St, corner Commonwealth St	21/12/1923
4	Farnham Arms	91 Albion St, corner Bellevue Street	25/02/1924
5	Federal Arms	285 Crown Street, corner Campbell Street	4/08/1921
6	Golden Fleece Hotel	538 Crown Street, corner Davies Street	8/12/1923
7	Golden Lion Hotel	99 Devonshire St, corner Buckingham St	5/12/1923
8	Gulgong Hotel	411 Bourke Street, near Campbell Street	28/03/1924
9	Lloyd's Hotel	21-23 Brumby Street, corner Clisdell St	30/06/1920
10	Madeira Inn	116 Devonshire Street, corner Holt St	11/02/1924
11	Macnamara's Family Hotel	89 Foveaux Street, corner Waterloo Street	5/12/1923
12	Mount View Hotel	381 Riley Street, corner Foveaux Street	13/12/1923
13	Princess of Wales hotel	33 Cooper Street, corner Holt Street	30/06/1921
14	Queen's Arms	389 Bourke Street, corner Campbell St	14/11/1923
15	Reservoir Hotel	263-5 Riley Street, corner Reservoir Street	30/06/1921
16	Rifleman's Arms	75 Fitzroy Street, corner Marshall Street	20/12/1923
17	Rosebery Arms	259-261 Crown Street, corner Goulburn St	12/04/1923
18	Royal George Hotel	480 Bourke Street, corner Phelps St	30/06/1921
19	Senatorial Hotel	31 Foveaux St, opp. Commonwealth St	30/06/1921
20	Standard Hotel	90 Cooper Street, corner Lacey Street	25/10/1923
21	Surry Hills Hotel	33 Smith Street, corner Reservoir Street	8/08/1921
22	Te Aro Hotel	25 Albion Street, corner Mary Street	9/01/1924
23	Thames Hotel	50 Buckingham Street, corner Bedford St	30/06/1921
24	True Briton Hotel	466 Elizabeth Street, corner Brumby St	29/11/1923
25	White Lion Hotel	199 Riley Street, corner Goulburn St	29/02/1924