



Mark Speakman

Attorney General

Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence

Victor Dominello

Minister for Customer Service

MEDIA RELEASE

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A WATCHWORD FOR WOMEN'S SAFETY

A campaign to keep patrons safe when socialising has now expanded to 25 liquor accords across the state, representing hundreds of pubs, clubs and bars.

Originating in the UK, *Ask for Angela* kicked off in Wagga Wagga in 2017 and has since expanded to the Sydney CBD as well as regional areas from Armidale to Albury.

Attorney General Mark Speakman said when a patron "Asks for Angela" at a participating venue, it immediately alerts trained staff to escort them to safety.

"No one deserves to feel threatened or intimidated when socialising, but if you're in that situation, "Asking for Angela" turns bar staff into guardian angels," Mr Speakman said.

Staff can intervene by calling police, organising safe transport home with a taxi or other ride share service, or by referring the patron to support services.

Data from the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research shows increasing reports of sexual assault, indecent assault and other sexual offences over the past five years. The number of recorded sexual assaults alone rose from 4988 in 2014 to 5819 in 2018 in NSW – reflecting a 17 per cent increase.

"While we can attribute some of that rise to more reporting – which we certainly want to see as every victim should feel supported in coming forward – at the same time, that analysis is by no means definitive," Mr Speakman said.

"That means that tackling this scourge, with the support of simple schemes like this one, is more important than ever."

Minister for Customer Service Victor Dominello said this is a modern approach to a modern problem.

"Given the popularity of dating apps, it's now fairly common for people to meet for the first time at bars and pubs," Mr Dominello said.

"*Ask for Angela* is a great example of the valuable work liquor accords are doing to create better, and more importantly safer, nights out for their patrons."

Liquor accords play a key role in the NSW Government's approach to create safe and vibrant communities, representing a collaboration between licensed venues, the NSW Police Force, Liquor & Gaming NSW, the Australian Hotels Association and local communities.

MEDIA: Damien Smith | Attorney General | 0417 788 947
Natalie Hissey | Minister Dominello | 0427 906 264