

**Submission
No 44**

MEASURES TO REDUCE ALCOHOL AND DRUG- RELATED VIOLENCE

Name: Mr Robert Candelori
Date Received: 14/08/2014

The Committee Manager
Committee on Law and Safety
Parliament House
Macquarie St
Sydney NSW 2000

14 August 2014

Dear Committee Manager,

RE: Measures to Reduce Alcohol and Drug-Related Violence (Inquiry)

I am writing to make a public submission to the abovementioned Legislative Assembly Inquiry.

To begin, I would like to express my complete opposition to the NSW Government's recent reforms that introduced compulsory 'lock-outs' and 'last-drinks' rules for venues in the Sydney CBD.

Sydney is Australia's largest and most populous city. The Government enjoys telling the media and citizens that Sydney is Australia's 'only global city'. The Government was also elected on a campaign of 'NSW Number 1 again'.

Yet, with these new laws, the Government has single-handedly tolled the death-knell of a vibrant and dynamic nightlife in Sydney. The 1.30am lock-outs and 3.00am last-drinks rules are a heavy-handed, disproportionate and, might I add, highly illiberal policy response ghost-written by the Daily Telegraph.

Once again, as has been the case in NSW for decades, a sensational media-driven campaign has resulted in the punishment of the vast majority of Sydneysiders who just want to have trouble-free, violence-free night out on the town, while a very small minority of violent perpetrators are given wrist-slaps and are not affected by the draconian policy response.

Why are law-abiding Sydneysiders paying the price and being held responsible for the actions of a violent few? Isn't this Government supposed to believe in the core principle of personal responsibility, or are its principles derived from whatever sensationalised editorial is featured in today's Daily Telegraph?

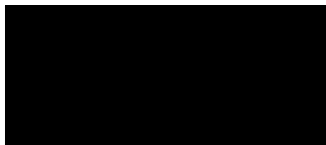
People who like to enjoy Sydney's nightlife are already faced with expensive taxis, infrequent or unavailable public transport, very expensive alcohol and invasions of personal privacy trying to gain entry into various clubs. Now, they face being locked out or unable to buy drinks. This policy also disproportionately affects people who work night shifts on weekends, such as hospitality workers, who may not finish in time before the lock-outs take effect. Are they not entitled to go out and have fun?

What makes this policy so appalling, however, is that this policy isn't rooted in any actual principles because The Star Casino complex is exempted, as are other venues that are arbitrarily categorised as tourist venues. In other words, the policy is not really concerned with reducing alcohol-related violence because the Government's largest backers are conspicuously exempted from the policy. Furthermore, the problem – to the extent there is one – is simply exported to other areas of the city not within the lock-out zone.

So, what I would say to the inquiry is: let's get real. It is time to stop appeasing the Daily Telegraph or talkback radio. If Sydney is supposed to be a global city, it is absurd that popular nightlife venues are forced to lock people out and stop serving drinks at prescribed times. If this policy was really about reducing alcohol-related violence, it would not be exempting or protecting pet venues like The Star, it should apply consistently to all venues. Once again, if this policy was really about reducing the incidence of one-punch violence, it would be primarily focussed on punishing the perpetrators, not the vast majority of people who behave appropriately and have no intention of causing trouble.

Lastly – and I apologise in advance for the flippancy – but the question I have for members of the committee and the Government is whether they have even the barest of recollections of their youth, or has their entire taxpayer-funded existence in recent years clouded everything? All we seem to get from the NSW Government, of either persuasion, is reactionary policy that invariably aims to regulate and/or ban fun. If the Government insists there is a problem, involve the community in a proper long-term transparent consultation process, from youths to businesses to the Police to the Bureau of Crime Statistics, rather than knee-jerk reacting to media stories and implementing a policy that is neither consistent nor principled.

Yours Sincerely,



Robert Candelori
Cabarita, Sydney