

**Submission  
No 67**

## **MEASURES TO REDUCE ALCOHOL AND DRUG- RELATED VIOLENCE**

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This ill-thought, hastily-designed solution to a long-term issue has proven a headache for all involved - punishing millions of law abiding citizens for the dangerous and foolish actions of a select few. I don't think the headline of the Daily Telegraph for a few days should dictate our laws, and for the clueless politicians who have risked the vibrancy of this city for a short term gain this needs to be carefully reviewed.

Firstly, the issue of transport has only become worse with these lock outs. I am from Wollongong, roughly 90 minutes by train south of Sydney. Like many people, I used to enjoy a night out in Sydney via the train though now that has become quite frankly too dangerous for me to do. Picture this: I get locked out 2AM after leaving a venue for a bite to eat, some fresh air etc. The first train home is at 4.30AM and the usually bustling inner-city streets (thanks to lockouts) are empty besides a few shady characters. I have to wait two and a half to three hours before the first train home. Where is my safety here? I can't enter a venue because it's law, and I can't wander the streets which have been cleared out can I?

Secondly, this has all but killed the burgeoning nightlife and culture that so many public officials work so hard to build. As a event-organiser and promotor, lockouts have made it impossible to reach the already difficult bar-minimums and cover charge quota to sustain our entertainment. We've been forced out of the city into warehouses and ill-suited venues that lack the street-traffic and police presence that make going out so much safer. I, alongside a lot of fellow organisers, have simply had to shut up shop and cancel important events for Sydney's cultural scene.

On this note, it is embarrassing to us that the late night alternative in our city is the Star Casino - a venue so devoid of anything supporting Sydney's culture that it acts as a personality vacuum for the population. How did we let this happen? How did the most violent venue in our nation become immune to something that has killed businesses who support the community. Where is their community outreach? How do they support this city besides robbing citizens and boosting the city crime rates?

This legislation fails to tackle problems which many people had been working to slowly but surely reduce over the past few years. Have any of these politicians tried to catch a cab on changeover time? Have they caught a crowded night-rider bus filled with drunk and dangerous citizens? Have they waited at a gloomy train station for three hours for the train home at 4am? I doubt it. These are where problems lie. Sydney's taxi system is so derived of adequate service that it probably causes more problems than it creates. Countless times I have been refused cabs for not going far enough - including situations of taxi drivers almost running over me just to speed away. I've seen fights break out because in a 100 person Kings X taxi line, only one cab comes every 15 minutes. Why does changeover exist in the first place? Why can't more busses and trains run late at night, and why do we allow this expensive, second rate cab service to continually rot our city.

1.30AM is generally around the time people need a break. Whether for something greasy to soak up the alcohol, or a breath of fresh air, or even a cigarette. This is the point where people want to take a breather so they can either party on or call it quits. The 1.30 lockout forces people inside. It creates dangerous situations where people do not want to leave and risk hurting themselves or others for the sake of a few more hours. The fact that all bars close at the same time as Taxi changeover is phenomenal in itself too.

Research has shown a majority of violence happens on the street. I feel that an increase in street police and better transport options (including more public transport and a spread of taxi changeovers) would help fix these problems. And for those who start altercations - ban them from the city area all together. They ruin things for everyone and it can't be allowed to continue.

Over the last six months I have watched friends, businesses and a vibrant community (that was finally starting to reach that of Melbourne or elsewhere internationally) fizzle into a 1.30 exodus and eventual permanent demise. For venues in the cross that offer no sense of community support, I could not care about their restrictions. But so many venues in the city - Goodgod, Spice, The Civic etc. give so much of their time and money to support something bigger and it is unfair that they are lumped into the same category. In fact, it makes me sick.

I hope this review will lead to some meaningful change, and the removal of lockouts/bar hours for venues that have proven to be culturally significant. For the good of our city and for the safety of its citizens, remove these harsh restrictions and let us become the global city we have strived for for so long.