

**Submission
No 98**

MEASURES TO REDUCE ALCOHOL AND DRUG- RELATED VIOLENCE

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To Whom It May Concern:

I first moved to Sydney two and a half years ago, as a 21-year-old graduate from New Mexico State University, having just finished an honours degree in biology. I came to Sydney with my partner, who was doing an internship here as the last component of a master's degree in international negotiation. I did not initially plan to stay in Sydney, but after a few months, my partner and I had fallen in love with the city. One of the characteristics of Sydney that struck me the most was the level of comfort, even in inner-city suburbs, where a young woman can safely walk down the street at any time of day without feeling threatened.

I've spent time in major cities in the US, such as New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Denver, just to name a few. I've travelled Europe and visited places like London, Paris, Prague, Amsterdam, and more. In none of these other places have I ever felt as safe as I do walking the streets in the Sydney CBD, Surry Hills, Darlinghurst, and even Kings Cross. When my partner and I moved here, we revelled in the friendliness and helpful nature of the people. I've lost belongings (valuable ones) that have been miraculously returned to me, purely out of the goodness of the hearts of strangers. The positive attitude of the people in Sydney results in a sense of cohesiveness, a feeling of community, even though Sydney is one of the major cities of the world where this sort of feeling is usually lost. This unparalleled sense of safety, and community was possibly the greatest contributing factor to my decision to stay in Sydney with my partner and apply for Australian permanent residency.

The idea that Sydney is unsafe and needs to be more strictly regimented is befuddling. Yes, unsafe things happen, car accidents happen, but it is impossible to remove one hundred percent of risk. If one car accident occurs while a driver is

listening to the radio, perhaps we could ascertain that the radio was distracting the driver. Would we outlaw radios for everyone? It is a stretch to link the two and the likelihood of it preventing further accidents is minimal at best, in the same way that the lock-out laws are unlikely to reduce crime rates overall. Adding more laws is not the way to address a situation that has only occurred only once or twice. Crime rates are already low compared to major cities in other countries. Implementing lock-out laws in an attempt to reduce risk further only creates risk in other ways.

I have personally been put into a very sticky situation because of the lock-out laws. A few weeks ago, I went to a nightclub in the CBD with a group of friends. Everyone was having a good time, drinking responsibly and dancing, as most young people do. I set my purse down with my phone inside it where my friends were dancing and stepped outside for a breath of fresh air. The next thing I knew, I was being rejected from returning to the club by the security guards. I hadn't even realised that I'd stepped out of the limits of the club. I was stuck on the street by myself with no phone, ID, or money and that's when I remembered that I'd also left my coat inside. The cold air of the early winter hours was far from comforting.

I pleaded with the security guards to let me back inside, but they were under strict guidance to refuse entry to anyone. Without my purse, I had no means of getting home and was unable to contact anyone else inside because my phone was in the purse. What was I to do? Start asking strangers for help? Ask a stranger for a ride home because I had no money for a taxi? I was a 24-year old girl, by myself, with no other options. I shudder to think of how my situation could have worsened if I'd tried any of those ideas. Luckily, after about twenty minutes of standing outside in the cold, frantically and unsuccessfully trying to talk my way back into the club, a friendly Sydneysider who was standing in the smoking area overheard my incessant pleas and offered his assistance. He was able to go inside, find my bag according to my description, and bring it out for me. I thanked him profusely and consider myself lucky that a good Samaritan overheard me that night. But I think about other girls who have been or will be in that predicament. Will they continue to harass the security guard the way I did and happen into someone who will help them? If a stranger does offer to help them, will this stranger have good intentions? Or will the girls bow their heads to the law and suffer the consequences? My hope is that the law is repealed so things like this do not continue to happen.