

**Submission
No 58**

MEASURES TO REDUCE ALCOHOL AND DRUG- RELATED VIOLENCE

Organisation: Bulletin Place
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Parliamentary Committee Inquiry into:

Late Night Licensed premises restrictions

Submission prepared by:

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bulletin place

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Background to our Business:

Bulletin Place is a multi-award winning small bar located in the heart of Sydney's financial district. Owned by three industry professionals, the bar has been trading since December 2012. We trade from 4pm until 1am, 6 days a week. Our business model is built upon treating the customer as a guest in our house. We aim to offer intimate service built upon the pillars of welcoming, knowledgeable service, utilizing the finest seasonal ingredients to construct a daily changing cocktail list.

Implications of the Late Night restrictions for our business:

During the last 2 months we have noticed a sizeable decrease in trading figures as they relate to the last hour of the evening. Now, patrons feel they must leave our venue early so as to ensure their entry into one of the cities late night trading venues (prior to 1:30am). We have noticed that from midnight most days, patrons will begin to vacate as there are very few late license venues within our proximity should they wish to continue their evening.

It has also come to our attention that the restrictions based on the sale of neat spirits after midnight has compromised our ability to serve single malt whisky to customers, at a time of the night that is traditionally appropriate. It feels unlikely to us (with our collective 50+ years of experience as operators) that customers willing to part with anywhere up to \$30 for a nip of whisky in a 45 capacity bar, served in a crystal tumbler with hand cut ice pose any threat to the sanctity of Sydney's still infant small bar scene.

In addition, as a growing business, we have had to pass on an opportunity to expand into a neighboring retail space, which became available, as there is no provision for us to vary the capacity of our license under the freeze.

We saw as operators in Melbourne the direct implications of the lock out, attempted there in 2008 (03 June 2008 – 02 September) and its associated failures to regulate or minimize alcohol-fuelled incidents on the whole. We saw there, as we are experiencing here the collective build up of patrons on the streets at 1:30 / 2am unable to get home due to the taxi changeover time. In Victoria, violence and criminal damage to property were actually exacerbated.

Sydney could (until recently) lay claim to have wrested the title of "Late night capital" away from Melbourne. A seismic shift has occurred within the hospitality industry in Sydney, venues here and their employees are regarded as some of the finest on the planet. This was seen last year with multiple domestic and international awards being bestowed on Sydney venues.

Due to the licencing freeze within the CBD, we have essentially stalled in new, notable venue openings, right at the time when the authorities should be assisting and aiding us in changing attitudes towards drinking and the way people drink, less but better. As it stands, the licensing freeze and the late night restrictions serve to

damage this industry as a whole, rather than punish solely those negligent operators.

We strongly feel that overall that while identifying poor operators and 'high risk venues' and implementing severe licensing restrictions on them is important, punishing all operators under the freeze and stage 2 restrictions, fails to recognise the good work of professional operators.

It seems to be all stick and no carrot. Surely it would be more productive to incentivise compliance and pro-activity around RSA and associated anti-social behaviour if exemptions to restrictions could be earned based on a venue's track records and plan of management. In our opinion, the privilege of trading without draconian restrictions would be worse to lose than the \$15,000 cost per strike on the license fee, which even small businesses can wear.

If anything sums up our feelings on the stage 2 restrictions, it would be the look on the faces of the international businessmen told that we are unable to serve him a nightcap from our top-end spirits selection; an ironic cocktail of bemusement, pity and ridicule and Sydney's reputation as a 21st century world city looking shaky.

Concerns raised by the lockout:

- The majority of law-abiding people punished by the actions of a small minority.
- Loss of freedom of choice.
- Reduction in civil liberties.
- Having to choose one venue for the rest of your night.
- Spoils what makes Sydney a wonderful city.
- Death of the entertainment scene and vibe in Sydney.
- Hospitality staff unable to go out after work.
- Shift-workers unable to go out after work.
- Bands & DJs unable to travel to late gigs.
- Not being able to meet friends at other venues.
- 1:30am-2am spillover period with the streets full of people.
- Still standing in a queue when the clock hits 1:30am leads to a large group being stranded on the street.
- Having such a large group of people roaming the streets will only add more problems for an already stretched police force.
- Queues and tension hailing taxis at 1:30am for those left stranded, thus now unable to continue their night.
- Increased operational costs for venues, which will be passed on to the patron.
- Thousands of revellers descending on e.g. Strawberry Hills Hotel after 1:30am.
- Devaluation in city apartment prices.
- Encourages illegal after-hours bars to operate.

Summary:

We thank you for taking the time to read this submission. We would like to extend an invitation to all committee members to come to the venue at any time. We're immensely proud of what we have built and the community we have fostered within our humble bar. We're keen to demonstrate, first hand, that we consciously wish to add to the late night culture of Sydney through thoughtful, professional & courteous service for all of our guests.

We understand you are all busy and time is scarce but we would welcome any enquiries to arrange a visit at your convenience,

Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me personally:

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Rob Sloan.