

**Submission
No 6**

MEASURES TO REDUCE ALCOHOL AND DRUG-RELATED VIOLENCE

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Submission to the Law and Safety Committee
Measures to Reduce Alcohol and Drug-Related Violence (Inquiry)

Dear Sir / Madam,

I expect you will receive multiple submissions on the issue of lockout laws, and additional measures taken to reduce violence, including restrictions on drinks being served and closing times. I suspect that many submissions will already highlight the issues that these laws have created, both financially, as well as decreasing employment. I have strong opinions and believe the new laws have a negative impact in these areas, however feel that my opinion will be the same as the multiple of other submissions you will receive highlighting these failures.

As such, I wanted to focus on one unintended consequence of the new laws, the increase in arguments and aggression on the front door of venues, after 1:30am when venues are forced to refuse patrons whilst still open.

I am the General Manager of Side Bar, located within the boundaries of the prescribed new lockout laws. I have worked here for two years, and have worked as a Senior Manager in bars for over eight years. We are a family owned backpacker venue, with a majority of our patrons being tourists to Sydney.

I run a venue with a capacity of 345 patrons, and usually run the venue with 5 security staff employed. We have a very low assault and violence rate, and have never appeared in the "tiered" system of high-risk venues. However, since the introduction of the lockout laws, our need to call police for assistance has increased from about once a month, to almost weekly, this is directly due to the lockout laws.

I have seen a marked increase in violence around my venue, usually directed towards myself or security staff.

From 1:30am we receive a steady stream of patrons attempting to gain access to the venue, all of which we are forced to refuse. This leads directly to arguments between patrons, and our security team. We expected this to only be for the first week or two of the new laws, however it has not slowed over the past few months of the laws. Every night we are in conflict with at least 8-20 guests, who all feel they are being unfairly refused. We explain the laws in detail, however this has little effect, and regularly turns to conflict, sometimes physical when they try to force their way in, however usually verbal. This however strikes fear into my guests when they leave and usually have to walk past several guests swearing at our security staff. This is a nightly occurrence for us. MY staff work long hours, and to stand on the door and be abused for 90 minutes every night, is a poor work environment and no doubt contributes to high attrition rates, as well as increased aggression.

Under the current Section 77 of the Liquor Act laws, both us and the police are unable to move them from the area, as the 50m exclusion zone, only applies if they are refused for intoxication, violence,

quarrelsome behaviour, as they are being refused due to lockout laws, they cannot be charged with Failure to Quit of a licensed premise.

For instance last night, I had two undercover officers attend at 1:35am, and in that time period they personally argued with multiple people requesting they leave the area after arguing with our staff about trying to enter after the curfew had started, but the police had little success in moving them on, and eventually gave up and left. The police are extremely helpful however, there is very little that they can do short of issuing a full move on notice, which they have had to do on numerous other occasions.

The second issue we face, is guests who have been in the venue and leave seeking to return after 1:30am. We have five signs, a full time guard telling people about the laws between 1am and 3am, yet we still have guests leave and try to re-enter. This leads to them not being able to collect their items, particularly jackets and handbags. We have another guard working primarily in this time period collecting their items, but in a nightclub environment trying to find a patrons jacket is almost impossible. This leaves the guest standing on the door between 1:30am and 3am, waiting for us to close so I can allow them in to search for their items. These guests usually have been drinking, and want to go home, but instead are forced into conflict with our security staff that enforce the lockout laws.

This also leaves my security team focusing on informing patrons of the lockout laws, and collecting jackets etc. instead of doing their primary role of spotting intoxication.

In the past few months that the lockout laws have been in place, we have had at least 50-100 patrons become aggressive, usually verbally, simply as we are doing our job. As a venue that closes at 3am already, the 1:30am curfew is greatly increasing the amount of conflict and aggression our venue faces.

I would invite any member of the committee to come and stand on our door after 1:30am on a busy night and see the conflict that enforcing this law has created. I understand venues that would otherwise be trading 24 hours, having a curfew in places, but for the vast majority of venues, refusing entry to patrons for the last 90 minutes of trade appears to have made little, if any, positive impact.

I thank you for the opportunity to have involvement in the process and appreciate your time in reviewing this submission. This submission is solely my personal submission, and whilst supported by the venue that employs me, is not our venues official submission.

Regards,

Jeremy Fraser