

**Submission  
No 1**

## **SYDNEY'S NIGHT TIME ECONOMY**

**Name:** Mr George Tulloch

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My name's George Tulloch and I live and work in Sydney. I moved here when I was 19 because I wanted to get away from the rural life and experience the excitement of the big city, that excitement no longer exists. I have studied engineering and graduated with a Sound and Music Design degree from UTS. I run my own business and have worked in the music industry for 8 years as a DJ, producer, promoter, marketing manager, and event manager.

The lockout laws have ruined Sydney, but in a way that's much more insidious than can be taken on face value. At its core the idea of reducing alcohol related harms is inherently good, but to institute a lockout at 1:30 as a response to two deaths at before 10 PM is profoundly illogical. Violence was trending down year on year and now it's statistically more dangerous to be in the lockout zone than before. It has been shown in Melbourne that an increase in public transport is more effective at reducing violence than lockouts. The night-time economy is 16 billion dollars underdeveloped. That's 16 billion dollars every year, which will completely fund any measures used to fund its development. For every \$1 we invest in the arts we get \$1.88 back.

Alcohol isn't Australia's problem, violence is. We need to be addressing why aggressive people feel the need to fight someone just to make themselves feel better or as if it gives them social capital and status. Alcohol in the short term doesn't change who people are, it just removes their inhibitions and brings what they hide day to day to the fore. Why would a violent person stop being violent simply because they can't drink where they used to? They won't, they'll drink closer to home, or at home, and take their violence out on members of their community or their families without trained security or police to intervene. It's been proven that domestic assaults increase the nights of state of origin games. That's the silent reality here, it's not a problem for the public at large because we don't see it, if the violence isn't in front of our eyes we don't seem to care. That isn't fixing a problem, it's sweeping it under the rug. I don't have a solution for this, but mandatory counselling and anger management infringement powers for police sounds like a great place to start. Not only will this have a great effect on public health and safety, it will have carry on effects for mental health for men who are under cultural impression that counselling is emasculating.

Gambling is destroying more lives than alcohol. Families are separating, homes and lives are being lost. We have created an environment where dependence on gambling revenue is central to most licensed venues business models. We need to ban poker machines in NSW, they serve no cultural value other than depressions and misery. The experience of being at a poker or roulette table is iconic in our movies and our history, they have a cultural value. Poker machines exist purely to reap money from the poor and easily addicted, I would add unfairly targeting people with ADHD who have very serious problems with addiction. I fully acknowledge that our current government will never ban poker machines, as they are funded too heavily by the gambling industry, I just wish someone would have the courage to do what John Howard did with guns and remove this blight from our society. That's a challenge for all the Liberal party members on this committee, be like your most famous living member.

It is inherent to the nature of life to alter the experience of that life, with recreational and medicinal drug taking evident in the animal kingdom, to ignore that reality is fallacy. In an ideal world I would like to see a license for consuming any drug, be it nicotine, alcohol, cannabis, opioids, stimulants, hallucinogenics etc. An individual would be tested by medical professionals to assess their level of consumption as to where overdose or sickness is guaranteed, and mentally assessed for capacity to handle the experience. More than that is not allowed to be purchased, and infringements can be given by police and other applicable public or medical officers when an individual consumes too much, just like road laws. A demerit point system would exist, and if an individual loses all their demerits, they lose their ability to purchase any drugs be it for medical or recreational purposes. Taking drugs isn't a right it's a privilege, one that can be taken away.

The lockout laws effect was not fully felt for years. It's only in the last year where people have just stopped going out. It's not fun, the streets are empty. It's cheaper to stay at home and export all our money overseas than spend it in our communities in a social environment. We have a rising mental health issue amongst our youth and I attribute this partially to the war on the youth's right to cultural and social experience. Loneliness and suicides are rising every year, but for some strange reason we think that has nothing to do with taking away social environments and in effect encouraging people to stay home, alone. The lockout laws effect citizens of greater Sydney more, the trains stop at 1:30, so it is \$100 to get home in a cab. With astronomical pricing on entertainment in the city going out is not just boring but economically unfeasible. The only way to

get these people to and from home safely and economically is 2- hour trains, as it has been shown that buses do not make the cut.

The government and media have spent years talking about how dangerous the city is, that now even if the lockout laws were repealed nothing can be done to fix it. Without 100s of millions if not billions of dollars of investment Sydney's further decent into obscurity is all but inevitable. We have interstate refugees fleeing this boring over-priced city and many of my friends are amongst that number. This is a far cry from the bustling international city I moved from rural NSW for. Our tech sector is struggling, our hospitality sector is struggling, I'm even told that City of Sydney is going bankrupt because they've lost that many businesses in their council area. I just don't know how this is even a discussion anymore, this is beyond reason.

I can go on and on about how these laws have ruined an already over-priced and exorbitantly expensive experience Sydney was, but I'm sure there are hundreds of other submissions that cover everything I have said much more coherently and have quoted the articles and studies I've mentioned. In short, I ask that you remove the lockout laws, introduce 24-hour trains, appoint a minister for the night time economy, ban poker machines and commit to an investment of quadruple that which Victoria invests in their arts and cultural sector to even have a chance of a bringing the life back to Sydney within the next decade. Anything else isn't going to cut it.