

**Submission
No 8**

SYDNEY'S NIGHT TIME ECONOMY

Name: Mr Lachlan Brookman

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To the Honourable Members Convened to Review the Lockout Laws,

My name is Lachlan Brookman. I am twenty-seven years old, and I am an architect, poet, music producer, and photographer. I contribute to the social, cultural, and economic fabric of Sydney, and have done for almost ten years now through art. As a young person, as an artist, and as a tax payer, I demand to be heard by the committee.

I am a resident of Surry Hills, and have lived in various suburbs of the electorate of Sydney since 2011. In this time I have seen the vibrant, bustling, and exciting nightlife of the city I love absolutely gutted by draconian laws imposed by those in government – so-called ‘representatives’ who prioritise pokies, casinos, and property developers over art and culture. Out of the dozen or so live music venues I used to frequent during the early days of my youth, less than a third are still open for business, and the rest are virtually incapacitated by the strict regulations on the service of alcohol, noise restrictions which make live music almost impossible, and ridiculous rules on entry times.

These laws have solved nothing. The alleged ‘solution’ that they provided to the violence problem of late-night venues in the city has demonstrably just shifted the problem to the fringes of the city. Violent crime may have gone down in the Kings Cross, but it’s increased at a proportionate rate in Newtown and Pyrmont. There may be fewer hospital admissions as a result of violence in St Vincent’s, but the same category of admissions has skyrocketed at Royal Prince Alfred hospital.

I recognise that the goal (apart from the overdevelopment of previously bustling cultural centres) was claimed to be the safety of residents and visitors to these areas, but that reasoning deserves nothing more than a laugh. Of course there won’t be any crime in an area if there’s no one there. Fun fact: did you know crime in Pripayat near Chernobyl has also dropped considerably in the years following 1986? Foot traffic in Kings Cross and Darlinghurst has dropped by 85% since the lockout laws were introduced, but when you consider the net increase in violence around hasn’t solved anything when you, and has in fact leads to a considerable increase in anti-social behaviour. None of my female friends feel comfortable walking through these areas alone anymore due to the fear that they will be attacked on a deserted street. This is not what Sydney should be like, especially not in 2019.

We used to be an international city renowned for its live music scene. I’m sad to say that after an embarrassing night out with a few friends who were visiting from London in 2015, I stopped telling my overseas friends to visit me in Sydney. I’m ashamed of what this city is, and I don’t want to show it off to anyone anymore. Have you any idea how utterly depressing it is to finish work at 2am only to find that the only place that’s still open for business is the casino in Pyrmont? It’s abhorrent, disgraceful, morally repugnant, and goes against what it is to be a Sydneysider, let alone an Australian.

The Lockout Laws were never anything more than a band-aid solution to a problem that could have been fixed with better policing, better public transport solutions, and proper education on alcohol consumption at a school level. Even worse, they were blatantly a course of action taken in order to make certain inner-city areas ripe for property development. This is a fact that is well known by the youth of Sydney, and over the course of the past three years I have seen most of my friends - who are employed in creative industries - move to Melbourne or emigrate to other places that value the night time economy and peoples’ right to enjoy themselves after dark, like London or New York.

Furthermore, I would ask you to consider this: the Government may consider this issue to be one that affects a very small proportion of the NSW constituency, but I could not disagree more. The property market in NSW is cooling. We’re in a per-capita recessions and we’re heading towards the brink of a housing crisis. What has been the industry that has propped up the NSW economy during previous recessions and during times of slow property growth? It’s been the night-time economy. Without this industry, New South Wales is headed for crisis. Run the figures, do the maths. We all need the cultural industry to get us over the line, and it sure isn’t working right now.

So, I plead with you as a young person who has had part of their culture stripped them: repeal the disastrous Lockout Laws. I implore you to listen to us, for we are the future.

Yours in hope,

Lachlan Brookman