

**Submission
No 120**

SYDNEY'S NIGHT TIME ECONOMY

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I personally feel that the nighttime lockout laws in Sydney are excessive, only serve to harm local businesses, do little for the safety of people who venture out at night, and significantly reduce both a serious chunk of Sydney's economic potential (as well as the draw of Sydney as a tourist destination).

In the detriment to local businesses, not only have we seen the shutting down of several major night time establishments, but comparatively to many other developed cities in the world, we seriously lack a night time economy of peripheral businesses. This includes entertainment establishments other than clubs and bars, later-night restaurants, live music venues, cinemas, etc. These archaic laws affect not only those who seek to head out to bars and clubs for a night out, but also people who would simply like to be out and about during the night time, going to see a film, live music, for dinner. Especially for those who work into the early evening, we lack the option to go see a film and get dinner after, or to go to a live music gig and catch a quiet drink at a pub after. When the lockout laws force the nightlife to shut down earlier, it also pushes back the opening hours of other businesses. I personally have tried at times to head to pubs in the city around 11pm or so, after an event - only to find them closed.

Even more, there is no vibrancy on the street, or in the feeling of the city at night. In other major cities in other countries, around 10-12pm you can still see people out and about - not being violent, not causing public distress, simply enjoying the night time. There is a vibrancy and good energy on the streets - even people in parks, plazas, and public spaces. Night time businesses thrive and it's majorly attractive to tourists. I've actually found that since the lockout laws have come into place, the streets increasingly feel dead, deserted, uncomfortable, and at many times, more unsafe. With a large variety of people out and about on the street, and with plenty of businesses open (not just the odd club or bar), it feels safe and comfortable being out on the street. I talked recently about this with a friend who has lived in Kings Cross before and after the instatement of lockout laws. He said how despite the large crowds coming to go clubbing in Kings Cross, it was a good buffer of people and made the area feel safer for him to walk home from a restaurant job that finished around midnight. Since the lockout laws, he no longer feels safe doing so, often catching an uber or taxi (even though the distance is short), as the emptiness of the streets means he no longer has the safety buffer of crowds. On at least 3 separate occasions of walking home post-lockout laws, he's been approached by unstable people he felt unsafe around, especially alone on the street with these people - something that had not happened pre-lockout laws. I have another friend who works in Potts Point at a restaurant on weekends, and has also attested to how unsafe she feels in the absence of crowds - to the point that she'll wait long after her shift is done just to have someone else to walk with to public transport. I have felt the same way in other areas. Even further in regards to public safety, I don't personally feel the risk of violent attack is at all reduced by having all of the crowd of people who are heading out and drunk being expelled out on to the streets at the same time (rather than having a continuous flow of a mix of people out on the streets, entering clubs, leaving clubs and experiencing the night time culture). Better ways to control night time violence and crime (as proven by both studies and other night time cultures in major cities) is better/more police presence on the streets, better options for public transport in the late night, and better surveillance systems in public areas.

The lockout laws are also a serious reductor of Sydney's reputation to tourists. I have travelled to many places in the world since the lockout laws were instated, and have heard the same thing time and time again from people I've met who travelled to Australia - that Sydney was beautiful, the beaches are great and they loved the daytime, but that the nightlife was terrible. A good number of these people also said that they would have stayed in Sydney for longer had the nightlife been better, but instead decided to move on after a couple of days of sight-seeing. The nightlife is, in comparison especially to major cities of the countries that tourists come from (the UK, other parts of Europe, South America), incredibly lacklustre and a major let down for an otherwise incredible city. This reputation has steadily spread amongst the traveller community too - these days, even people who haven't yet been to Australia have heard about how bad Sydney's nightlife is.

It is seriously disappointing what these laws have done to Sydney. Australia is one of the richest and most beautiful countries in the world, and Sydney is such a unique city in terms of our beaches and nature. We have the potential to be one of the best cities in the world, but are seriously let down by the fact that almost the entire city shuts off as soon as the sun goes down. There aren't many places in the world that have the unique set of circumstances as Sydney - the proximity to national parks, the good weather most of the year, beautiful beaches so close to the city centre, connected to a major airport, great working opportunities for both citizens and

travellers alike. It is such a shame that 12 out of 24 hours, the lockout laws don't allow us to fully realise what the city could be.

The spirit of these laws is archaic, controlling, unsupportive of local business and frankly, un-Australian. If the state government really cares about public good, they would do better to focus on better police support in the night time, better late night transport options and better security (video surveillance and otherwise) in public areas. And most of all - the Australian public needs to be trusted to enjoy the night time as other publics are in many, many other major cities around the world.