

**Submission
No 267**

SYDNEY'S NIGHT TIME ECONOMY

Name: Mr John Ferris

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The Chair,
Joint Select Committee on Sydney's Night Time Economy,
Parliament House, Macquarie Street,
Sydney NSW 2000.
NightTimeEconomy@parliament.nsw.gov.au

RE: Joint Select Committee on Sydney's Night Time Economy

1. The introduction of lockouts in particular has had real impacts on our industry. I have worked in entertainment, clubs and venues and the music business for over 25 years. Music and musicians need venues to be played in, to be heard. Musicians need to be paid, venues need to make money to survive and pay the musicians. For whatever reasons, a lot of people feel better listening to music at night and also with being able to drink alcohol at the same time. The alcohol sales profit also translates into income for venues to pay for the things they need such as musicians. Venues that don't sell alcohol find it difficult, if not impossible to rely solely upon door sales to pay staff, music costs, rent, electricity and other infrastructure costs. Whilst the lock out laws may not be the only reason for the closure of some many venues since 2014, but these laws have been the catalyst and the most significant reason for venues to close in the last 5 years. Especially in a city with soaring rent, mortgages and cost of living to deal with.

Customers (punters) were used to going to venues at a variety of times during the day and night, but with the sudden introduction of the lock out laws, many customers felt they were locked out entirely and simply stopped going, or couldn't be bothered to go, or thought they weren't allowed or felt they weren't wanted out in Sydney. (The demonization of young people and especially from the western suburbs was astonishing). The risk of missing the lock-out cutoff, of not being able to get back in, or then not being able to get into other venues if the first choice was a poor choice and not wanting to risk the expensive cab fares or other inconveniences, forced people to just give up going to clubs. Let's face it, the lock out laws are specifically targeted at night clubs with music and not at venues that operate between 4pm and 10pm, despite the fact that violence, the 'king hits', the 'coward punches' happened at 9pm before most dance clubs were open for trade.

The sudden loss of thousands of people from venues simply killed them. If over 270 venues have closed since the lockouts (by 2019) and the average capacity was 150 people, then there has been a loss of 40,000 people visiting venues on a weekly basis! Good Venues were and still are punished for trading responsibly and looking after their customers. The so called violence on the streets was not caused by music venues, but by people behaving badly outside venues, outside of trading hours, due to lack of police on the street in that area, lack of transport out of Kings X and a clustering of venues.

Sydney is an expensive place to live and work and the perception that venues were not open anymore was enough for the punters to make an easy decision and to avoid the risk of going out.

Even prior to the lock out laws but especially since over policing and overzealous security and policing has made the experience of going out humiliating, overbearing, insecure and uncomfortable. If you look the wrong way, dress the wrong way or with too many friends when entering venues, you don't get in to places, so why bother going out when the venues close early, drinks are expensive and you may not get in after you've come all the way to the venue. If the object

was to make going out impossible to go out, then the implementations of the new lock out laws was super successful. In terms of night time activities, Sydney is now considered the most boring capital city in Australia.

With the venues closing, the loss of jobs of business owners is just the tip of the iceberg, jobs behind bars, taxi driver income, security staff, floor staff and then entertainment staff – promoters, musicians and djs have all had significant job losses in the sector. 270 venues closed would put out of work at least 10 people per venues, that's at least 2,700 jobs directly, let alone all the associated (food outlets, taxi's, suppliers etc). Literally thousands of job losses at the hands of the government's heavy handed implementation of a blunt instrument, with no consultation with the sector and no concern for any nuanced response for venues that had no issues with violence.

On top of these job losses and venue closures, the talent, the entertainment no longer has places in which to play, practice, hone their skills and become better and more accomplished. These venues had been home to extraordinary international success such as Flume, Peking Duk, Timmy Trumpet, The Preatures and many more electronic and club acts. But Sydney is no longer developing talent in that way. It is much more difficult. Further with 270 less venues it means a much smaller market to even think about working in.

As a nationally touring DJ during the period 1997 to 2010, I was able to develop a strong audience base and following due to running a club night on a weekly basis event in Sydney. Which I was then able to expand my popularity to other cities via a Sydney based media (now gone) and a reciprocal swapping of talent and audiences in other cities clubs. Consequently I developed popularity as performing artists in Sydney and was able to translate and transfer that to other Australian cities, further developing a brand for selling music products, which then led to developing an international audience. Like many other performers prior to the lockouts. I was lucky to tour nationally twice a year covering all Australian capital cities, regional cities and towns, over 100 shows a year for a number of years. Sales for the tours outside of Sydney came back through the Sydney based bookers, labels, media people and merchandising. All due to being able to build an audience here, in Sydney. That is no longer available for thousands of creative people and artists in this city.

Prior to the lock out laws, the development of international audiences was available to Sydney based artists, which brings in money back from OS from tours, music sales, merchandising and tourism. Sydney once was considered a hot bed of talent to visit. This is no longer the case. Whilst no denigrating current talent, a lot now move to Melbourne, LA, London, Berlin or don't even bother.

The lack of venues in one of the major cities in Australia also impacts on the ability of tour and concert promoters to tour Australian acts across the country. This is essential to for both promoters and artists to be able stay alive professional and personally. To not have Sydney shows is a huge hole in the local marketing plan. This is also even more pronounced for international acts at mid level. Sur, big box events have Homebush and ICC but the mid level local and international acts now struggle as there is a dearth of venues in Sydney. Promoters can no longer budget tours to make them work due to lack of available venues in the small to medium size venues.

Tourism has also suffered at many levels.

Melbourne is considered the music capital of the country with 465 live venues and the music industry generates in excess of \$1.42 billion in the city; with 62,000 annual performances attracting more than 12 million patrons in Melbourne. Melbourne discussed lock out laws

some years ago and sensible realised that would be a huge mistake and voted against them and it now boasts with plenty of confidence that it is the most exciting city in the country, as well as the fastest growing city. Sydney is slipping quickly. Young people are leaving Sydney to live in Melbourne.

<https://corporate.visitvictoria.com/news/melbourne-live-music-capital-of-the-world>

Melbourne has over 200 dance club venues of medium size – approx. 150 to 200 people. Sydney now has a handful.

In Berlin Germany, 15,000 tourists come every weekend just for the clubs.

<https://www.dw.com/en/berlins-club-scene-shifts-the-focus-of-tourism-to-the-city/a-5349667>

Again, if the intention is to have a boring night time city (as the Police seem to want) then so be it, we certainly now have it the lack of options.

Venues also pay for the right to play music. The public performance of music through their music license fees to Apra and PPCA organisations, which flow back directly to the artists, managers and labels has now been drastically reduced by over 40% in NSW. These artists and labels that relied upon this income have seen a huge hit to their bottom line from the loss of venue license fees in the millions. Once, whereby an artist could rely upon the income from their club play of their music, that is no longer the case. We have also had a large number of music labels disappear from Sydney due to these falling revenues. Again, all these losses were not planned for in any of the business models as the implementations of the new regulations were never consulted with the industry.

I believe that a policy for licenced venues should include a proper evaluation of the venue's behaviour in regards to the sale and management of alcohol and not based upon often vague Police recommendations and spurious statistics from violent events recorded. Violent events are recorded against venues that had and have nothing to do with the act of violence. For example why can't a venue or bar serve shots in glasses away from bar in a venues that has never had any violence? And the assessment of violence should not be based upon where people have drunk, but where the violence occurs. Why should a venue be penalised for domestic violence when the perpetrator is responsible for the violence and not the venue in any remote way. Should all bottle shops that supply alcohol be banned where a perpetrator of domestic violence bought the product at their store. No, they shouldn't, because the violence is the fault of the perpetrator and not the person or business that sold it. The people causing the violence should be blamed and not the venue. So why are venues penalised this way?

To fix this,

1. Lock out laws should be scrapped. Business will only invest where there is some legal certainty
2. Venues need some sort of security of business trading and not have their business shut down at the whim of Parliament under siege from media companies to change laws.
3. We should look at policing of venues to be carried out by trained professionals educated in patron management, proper customer service management and trained in how to deal with alcohol and noise issues. The Police are clearly not equipped to do this type of job, as their training is significantly different and they are not in the business of making sure venues are safe, well run and inviting. Police only want to shut down venues.

4. Venue Security also needs to have their focus retrained to look for people with issues and not just respond in an aggressive manner that only further fuels the fire.
5. Venues need to supply Hosts as well as security inside and outside venues
6. More available public transport available in areas of late night activity
7. Nuanced response to issues with venues.
8. Incentives are needed to host music in venues such.

I currently work in a music company licensing music to film, TV, advertising. I have seen the impacts of the lock out laws at first hand to many friends and hard working professional people - musicians, bookers, promoters, djs and punters. People who have never caused or been involved with any violence and had their lives disrupted and sometimes destroyed through the actions of the governments lock out laws. People can decry that the laws saved lives, well, all I've seen is that they have destroyed many lives.

The electronic music sector contributes 250 million dollars per year to the Australian economy but has been reduced by around 35% since the lock out laws from loss of jobs, events, tours, license fees and music sales.

I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this process and build a better mutual understanding across government and the electronic music sector.

Please don't hesitate to be in touch if the inquiry would like further assistance from our important community.

Yours sincerely,