

**Submission
No 279**

SYDNEY'S NIGHT TIME ECONOMY

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The Hon. Natalie Ward MLC
Committee Chair
Joint Select Committee on Sydney's night time economy

Dear Ms Ward

SUBMISSION TO THE *INQUIRY INTO SYDNEY'S NIGHT TIME ECONOMY*

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the *Inquiry into Sydney's night time economy*. I have been visiting Sydney for 30 years and think that it is a more vibrant, diverse and safe place since the 'lockout' laws were introduced.

Before those laws were introduced there was clearly a huge problem with late night and early morning intoxication and unpredictable violent behaviour. Now, Sydney is a vibrant and diverse city with many activities on offer. Sydney's night options also extend well beyond the CBD and Kings Cross and it is positive to see these options and that growth across the entire city.

I am a social scientist who has worked for many years on drinking problems – mostly in the Indigenous population. For this reason I have a good understanding of the damage caused by drinking and am familiar with the international literature on preventing harm. The World Health Organisation for example lists restrictions over hours of opening as one of their 'best-buy' alcohol policies to reduce harm. I still cannot understand why it is such a problem to have 'last drinks' at 3 am! I also cannot understand why it is considered to be a major imposition to have to stay in one premises until that time. People out for a night out have probably already adapted to this slight restriction. These changes seem to be a relatively small price to pay in order to achieve the considerable reductions in alcohol problems that have been measured. The fact is that we have an embedded culture that has normalised drinking-to-get-drunk in a way that many other countries do not.

I do believe that the 'lock out laws' have been made the scapegoat for a number of other issues that coincided – such as the demise of the music scene, changing demographics and different ways in which young people have fun. Maybe people were getting tired of Kings Cross in any case – it was hardly a sophisticated scene.

I strongly oppose any watering down or removal of these laws. They save lives, prevent violence and ill-health, and they have improved Sydney.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to raise these important issues with you.

Yours sincerely

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