

**Submission  
No 316**

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

**Name:** Ms Joanne Spiteri

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To Whom It May Concern,

I am a 49-year-old Sydney woman who has been going to clubs for over 31 years. I've lived in Sydney my entire life. I am passionate about music and dancing. I met my boyfriend at 6am at a club, over 20 years ago. If the lockout laws were in place in 1998, we may never have met.

The lockout laws were a reaction by a government not willing to do its job. Instead of looking at licensing reform, 24-hour transport for a 24-hour Sydney, and more effective and collaborative policing of entertainment precincts, the government shut the nightlife down. Sydney is losing out on around \$16 billion a year due to an underdeveloped night-time economy.

Nightclubs are more than just dispensaries for alcohol. For many they are the only place to meet people like themselves. It's necessary for everyone to have a common space where inhibitions can be broken down and new connections made. This process takes time, so it is equally necessary that this common space stays open all night.

Going home after clubbing now is much harder to do safely. If I want to go home after 1.30am, and my partner wants to stay out, I must go to the car or public transport on my own. Neither my partner nor my friends can walk me there, or they won't be able to get back into the venue. And, as the streets are so vacant now, I am much more concerned that if I'm attacked, nobody will hear my screams, and come to help.

The sheer number of clubs that have permanently closed is detrimental to the economy. Less people go out, and other businesses go under. The Newsagent in Oxford St shut after decades of business. This was not just a newsagent, it was a meeting place for so many friends. So many take-away food shops have now permanently closed. There are many vacant retail premises in previously thriving areas.

The closures have led to less variety of available clubs. With less places to go, there are more non-music focused people coming to the clubs we like to go to, making it much harder for us to enjoy ourselves.

Friends are leaving NSW in droves. Since 2014, over 40 friends have moved out of Sydney. Many have gone to Melbourne and Europe. Since the result of the 2019 State Election was announced, more have left or are in the process of organising their move. Other friends have decided to leave once they finish their studies. Sydney is an expensive place to live. Without places to go to enjoy their free time, why would they stay here?

When friends previously went overseas to live, they would stay a few years, then come back to Sydney to live permanently, including those who wanted to raise families. This is not happening anymore.

The number of people going out in the lockout areas has fallen way more than the incidents of violence. This means, per capita, that violence has risen.

Employment for the young was already problematic before the lockouts. Recent figures show youth unemployment worsening, especially in the Eastern Suburbs of NSW. An area that is notoriously wealthy. With businesses going under, who will employ the youth?

If the lockout laws stay, in 20 years' time, Sydney will be the Florida of Australia. Only the old will live here, gambling away their lives. Parents will be upset that their children will move away after school, as there is no entertainment. There will be no world-famous musicians from performing in pubs and clubs, as there will scarcely be any pubs and clubs left. Bands like INXS would never have been discovered without pubs and clubs.

If my boyfriend and I were in our 20s, and the lockout laws had been implemented, we would have moved to Melbourne. As we are both in our late-40s now, and have entrenched lives here, it is harder to consider. But, if either of us lost our jobs, we would move to Melbourne. This was something we rarely discussed prior to the lockouts. Now it's a regular occurrence.

Those who approve of the lockouts look to how Newcastle fared. Remember, the population of Sydney is significantly larger. A lockout is not the way ahead for a city to stay world class. I wouldn't call Florida a world-class city, so why would anyone want to turn Sydney into Florida?

I have travelled to numerous places in Europe and the USA over my life. Vibrant cities like Berlin and Barcelona don't have lockouts. Tourism is a huge part of their economies. I thought that tourism was important to Sydney. Friends overseas no longer want to come to Sydney. If they come to Australia, Melbourne is now their focus.

We are now spending a lot less of our hard-earned income in Sydney. We tend to go to Melbourne, Hobart and Adelaide as much as we can, as there is much more freedom there to enjoy life. 5 years ago, I would NEVER have thought that Adelaide was a vibrant place to go. So much has changed.

Let music focused venues remain open 24 hours a day. Have public transport running 24 hours a day. Reform licensing. Have more effective and collaborative policing of entertainment precincts.

Sydneysiders work hard and deserve to go out in their spare time. Whether that involves going to Church, line-dancing, spending time with families, having dinner with matching wines, or dancing to electronic music whilst sipping a cocktail, should be up to them, not the government.

Adults who want to have a good time shouldn't be chastised for it, and they shouldn't be penalised for the misbehaviour of a few stray idiots.

All solutions should encourage more people into the city at night because a vibrant nightlife is not the cause of social decay; it is the cure.

When you are considering what to do about the lockout laws, please think about all of this. And what sort of city you want Sydney to be.