

**Submission  
No 347**

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

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I wish to submit that the lockout laws have been very poorly designed based on dubious data analysis and should be revoked. There are number of compelling points to consider.

The original lockout laws in Newcastle were based on very flimsy arguments, with more a political and emotive approach behind the introduction. The data simply didn't exist to justify either the lockout or the curfew let alone the particular choice of 1.30am and 3.00am. The researchers had no data on alcohol consumption differentiated by day let alone by before or after a point in time.

The use of non domestic assaults as a proxy for alcohol related violence has limited studies to justify it. The data is noisy and is influenced by many other variables such as patron numbers, hotel stays, crime gang dynamics, homelessness, unemployment and broader recreational drug consumption and purity.

Once the so called "Newcastle solution" was introduced, the researches treated this as a way to obtain a time series comparison to estimate the quantity of violence due to alcohol served after 3am as a means to justify the curfew. Of course they could not decorrelate the effect of the lockout. The restrictions introduced caused a pronounced loss of the night time entertainment industry in Newcastle which no doubt reduced both patron numbers and alcohol volume sold as all times. There were also other components of the restrictions such as no strong liquor shots and restrictions on take away alcohol vending. It seems very difficult to extract meaningful data about any particular measure from this mess of variables over rather dispersed time series yet the researches seemed happy to attempt this and feed the media the results without qualifying that any mechanism that might cause a reduction was not understood and the amount of noise didn't lend the data to firm conclusion

The loss of a centralised nighttime entertainment venue has damaged Newcastle's economy and its importance as a cultural hub. The same phenomenon occurred in Sydney with the introduction of restrictions. Newcastle needs cultural power to offset its exposure to the coal industry and Sydney obviously requires it to attract international tourists and retain its ranking of importance among the global cities. The effect of the decentralised entertainment and drinking behaviour is difficult to measure because for any particular region any increase in violence would not be statistically significant due to the dispersal over very large cultural catchments and the inadequacies of using non domestic assault data.

The introduction of the laws seems to have been timed to boost apartment construction, with the closed venues providing developers with sites and the reduction in noise due to the entertainment activity perceived to be positive to apartment sales. The apartment building cycle has finished, so it would be appropriate to encourage the entertainment sector.

The areas in question retain some entertainment business so presumably apartment dwellers are somewhat at ease with their presence. The potential conflict between apartments and entertainment hubs is one relating to technical issues such as noise abatement and social issues such as transport capacity and support workers. Resolving these issues presents opportunities for employment during what may be a recession, with costs being offset by appropriately extracting levies from the entertainment industry

Overall I believe that there is ample reason to revoke the lockout and curfew on a trial basis or incrementally ease restrictions

Yours Sincerely

Stephen Hicks 1/7/2019