

**Submission
No 390**

SYDNEY'S NIGHT TIME ECONOMY

Organisation: Pyrmont Action Inc.

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I write on behalf of Pymont Action Inc. Pymont has experience of 24-hour trading in tourist areas at Darling Harbour, The Star, and the area around the Pymont Bridge Hotel. The commercial centre of Pymont is located in the vicinity of Harris Street and trading hours are governed by the City of Sydney which consults with local communities if applications are received for extension of hours.

General Comments - Generally, there is a view that Sydney (in contrast to Melbourne and major overseas cities such as London and Paris) suffers from a culture that says that you have to get drunk to have fun (a hangover from the Rum Corps days?). This is exacerbated by lax laws applying to the promotion of alcohol and advertising and prevalence of gambling outlets across the city and the state. Before any consideration is given to expanding 24-hour trading venues, fundamental changes need to be made to provision of 24-hour public transport, more visible police presence in such areas and strict monitoring by both those managing the venues and by public officers charged with regulating anti-social behaviour. Our comments on the City's proposed changes are provided in this context.

24-hour City Centre – We do not support extension of late night trading across the city centre but would welcome the activation of cafés/small bars/restaurants, with outdoor seating along George Street and in Martin Place both during the day and in the evening. All such venues should be required to serve food, along with alcohol to mitigate the worst effects of alcohol. At present the centre of the city is dead in the evening. There are few such venues in the vicinity of the Angel Place concert hall which serve meals after 9pm. There are other ways to enliven our city without introducing 24-hour trading. We do not support 24-hour trading in the city centre but would support other measures to activate the city, including those mentioned above. One measure could be to close lanes and narrow streets to vehicular traffic to enable the establishment of cafes and bars with outdoor seating such as you find in many European cities.

We would also welcome the reintroduction of venues which serve food and beverages to the accompaniment of live music such as was offered by the Basement and Soup Plus. We deplore their closure and would encourage their re-establishment in suitable new or refurbished buildings in the City and in local areas, but with a closing time of no later than 2am.

The big issue inhibiting the establishment of a café culture in the CBD is the high rents charged by owners of the towers which now reduce our streets to narrow canyons. It appears that developers are encouraged to incorporate underground/internal food courts rather than venues which can flow on to the street to take advantage of Sydney's (still) mostly pleasant climate. We would ask those approving future development to ensure that street dining is incorporated in plans. This would require a new business model which enables modest rentals to be charged for such venues.

Increase Hours for Low Impact Venues in Local Areas – In Pymont, there are several 24-hour venues already operating (The Star, Pymont Bridge Hotel and nearby venues). Whilst The Star invests heavily in internal security and anti-social behaviour and is generally well managed inside its venues, the area around Pymont St and Union Street remains the locus of reported criminal and anti-social events. A number of hotels operate mainly in Harris Street and we would oppose any increase in hours of operation as they are adjacent residential properties. They generally cater for local residents and workers and provide venues for community events such as fund-raiser quiz nights and are valued as such. Extension of drinking hours would inevitably attract out-of-area patrons more interested in getting drunk, than in engaging in good conversation accompanied by food and drink. We would strongly oppose the introduction of loud music to these hotels in residential areas.

New Areas for new communities – Whilst late-night trading areas (not 24-hour) may be suitable in an arts focused industrial heritage warehouse area in Alexandria at a distance

from residential properties, and we do not support late night trading in Chippendale, Walsh Bay or Dank Street (with their large residential populations). Green Square also has high density residential development adjacent public areas and trading hours need to take account of noise and safety impacts.

Encourage performance, culture and unlicensed businesses – We strongly support the establishment of unlicensed shops and businesses across the city, noting that in most major cities in Europe shops operate from 10am to 10pm. In particular, we support such businesses in the city centre to complement street level cafes/restaurants. And Sydney has a dearth of performance spaces, especially in local areas. We have been seeking provision of suitable community performance and rehearsal space in Pyrmont/Ultimo since 2006, so far without success. We have also encouraged developers such as The Star to provide a local cinema in Pyrmont, again with no success. Such a venue would encourage workers to remain in the area after work, thus boosting trade for local cafes, restaurants and bars which, at present, find it hard to be profitable as city rents prevail on properties in our local area. However, we do not support 24-hour trading in local areas.

We also support the extension of trading hours by one hour after the close of performances for cafes and bars associated with venues such as theatres, concert halls and cinemas with up to 250 patrons.

But, as stated in our introductory remarks, any changes to the current laws and planning controls must be predicated on the provision of 24 hour public transport in the areas in which such changes are applied, and that includes to and from local areas, if extended trading hours are introduced.

Yours sincerely,

Elizabeth Elenius
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