

**Submission  
No 392**

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

**Organisation:** Soapbox Agency

**Date Received:** 2 July 2019

The Chair,  
Joint Select Committee on Sydney's Night Time Economy,  
Parliament House, Macquarie Street,  
Sydney NSW 2000.  
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## **RE: JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON SYDNEY'S NIGHT TIME ECONOMY**

1. Lockouts have had a massive impact on our industry.

I have been working in the entertainment/DJ/Promoter business for 26 years. For most of that time this business was a thriving, vibrant industry to work in. That all stopped when the lockouts began. I watched many of my colleagues and clients lose everything they had worked hard to achieve within a matter of months. The sudden loss of thousands of people from venues simply made it impossible for them to survive financially. This didn't only apply to music and entertainment venues, but also saw the closure of many iconic late night food vendors who added to our cities cultural footprint and vibrancy.

Venues need people to come to them and they look to provide various offerings to attract the business, the main one being music and entertainment. The restrictions that were put on late night trading meant that people now had to pick a spot and be happy with that, as opposed to being able to club hop around the city and experience a variety of entertainment options. This was nothing more than a backward step for the people of Sydney and our culture, but it's clear there were other items on the agenda for the government at the time, the main one being pushing everyone to the casinos where the government participates financially.

Over 270 venues have closed since the lockouts (by 2019). If the average capacity was 200 people on both a Friday and Saturday night, then that is over 100,000 people that aren't going out and supporting not only the venues but the public transport system/taxis and the local commercial districts around these venues. The lockout laws were nothing short of a short sighted, reactionary decision made by corrupt politicians (Barry O'Farrell) who gave no consideration to the domino effect it would have on the surrounding industries. Let's not forget whilst violence dropped in Kings Cross by 34% in the first 2 years it rose by 30% at the Casino. Not really something to hang your hat on!

With all these venues closing, the loss of jobs was an immediate reality. Those immediately effected were the venue staff, security staff, DJ's/musicians, taxi drivers and cleaners to name a few. That's a lot of trained people who then were faced with trying to find other employment in what was a quickly diminishing field of opportunity. Thousands of jobs lost due to a poorly researched decision that was made off the back of two tragic incidents that had NOTHING/ZERO to do with licensed venues – let's not forget that! Those perpetrators who committed the coward punches had come from home, not entered a venue or even purchased a drink from the precinct before they committed those callous acts.

In addition to the job losses and venue closures, the talent no longer had places to perform and hone their creative skills. These venues had been the breeding ground to many local Australian acts that have gone on to have international success, acts such as Flight Facilities, Flume, Tommy Trash,

Timmy Trumpet, Birds of Tokyo, The Presets, The Preatures to name a few. Unfortunately we now have a much smaller strike rate of converting this home grown talent into international stars as we don't have the abundance of venues we once had to nurture this talent.

In addition to the nigh time economy suffering so too has the tourism industry. This year in one poll Sydney was rated the tenth worst city in the world, and having travelled as extensively as I have I agree with this. It's embarrassing!

<https://www.timeout.com/sydney/news/why-was-sydney-rated-the-tenth-worst-city-in-the-world-and-what-can-we-do-about-it-032019>

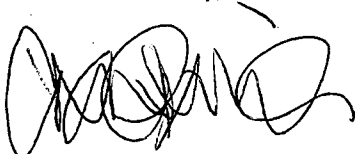
Melbourne in that same poll was ranked the second best in the world! Once again I agree with this as it is now the music capital of our country with over 500 live venues. Their music industry generates in excess of \$1.42 billion. There are over 60,000 shows and performances per annum which attracts over 12 million punters.

Melbourne were actually the first city to trial the lock out laws and they quickly realised this had it's own slew of issues which far outweighed the benefits of having the lockouts, so the idea was scrapped and now the city is our most vibrant in the country, in fact according to timeout poll it's the second best in the world!!

I have for the last 13 years run a touring business in Sydney called Soapbox Agency. I have been at the coalface of the lockouts watching everything crumble. I have experienced a massive downturn in business and have had to shift my business focus to opportunities outside of Sydney and Australia. I DJ'd in the 90s and still do today, so I have seen the effects of the lockouts from multiple sides and it's been rough. The worst part has been seeing people lose their livelihood and see them go through the various side effects of this. It has disintegrated many a creative spirit and in many of those people the damage is done, but there is always the hope for change and I hope that my insights will help give some rounded thoughts into how the entertainment industry as well as others would benefit from changes to these laws. Let's make Sydney a vibrant city again!!

I appreciate the opportunity to give my feedback and ask that you don't hesitate to contact me should you need any further information or insight.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Trent Grimes', with a stylized, cursive script.

Trent Grimes