

**Submission  
No 397**

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

**Name:** Mr Zac Sinclair

**Date Received:** 1 July 2019

Dear members of the Joint Select Committee on Sydney's night time economy,

I am making this submission regarding the lock-out laws in the Sydney CBD & King's Cross districts as both a lifelong resident of Sydney & a long term worker in the hospitality industry (15 years hospitality, 9 in licensed venues).

When the lockout laws were first introduced in 2014 I was working as a bar attendant at the [REDACTED]. During this time we saw an increase in late night patronage & a disproportionate increase in anti-social & aggressive behaviour. This anti-social & sometimes violent behaviour more often than not took place on the street rather than inside venues. Management & security staff had expressed that they feared getting involved in events such as these as they worried the blame would be placed on the venue regardless of whether those involved were patrons.

I then spent a short time working at [REDACTED]. At my time in this venue I witnessed a culture of excessive drinking & further anti-social behaviour.

It is due to this front line experience that I believe the lockout laws were poorly conceived & did little to diminish the negative impacts brought on by alcohol consumption. The existing problems were instead shifted onto different areas.

I then moved to my current workplace at the [REDACTED] as an assistant manager. The effects of the lockout laws were immediately apparent as foot traffic & patronage of CBD venues had significantly decreased not just during the lockout period. Many venues started to shut down or scale back their operations. Staffing was cut down as sales decreased & entertainment such as live music, DJs & special events diminished.

Due to our location backpackers make up a large percentage of our patronage & we often receive comments about the lack of nightlife in Sydney. Many of our staff on working holiday visas cut their planned stays in Sydney short & moved interstate. I believe this will have long term effects on Sydney's tourism as word of mouth continues to spread that Sydney is a "no fun" city.

I believe a much more effective strategy to deal with the negative impacts of alcohol consumption are

- Increased travel options (i.e. late night buses, trains etc). This will decrease the numbers of people hanging around on the street after leaving venues as this is often where instances of violence occur.

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- Increased police presence in nightlife hot spots. The physical presence of officers will decrease the risks of violent & anti-social behaviour. The threat of being cut off from the bar or asked to leave creates incentive for patrons to behave & venues have security to help calm arising issues & intervene if/when these escalate but once people are more reckless & likely to display aggression.
- A focus on personal responsibility for an individual's behaviour. While licensed venues have a responsibility both legal & moral to follow RSA laws & to not allow intoxication it is naïve to expect that any venue can completely eliminate this. The increased issuing of failure to leave a licensed venue fines, short & long term bans & harsher punishments for alcohol related violence will help signal to people that alcohol is not an excuse for anti-social behaviour & will punish those behaving poorly without punishing those doing the right thing.
- Campaigns focusing on the negative impacts of excessive alcohol consumption & anti-social behaviour. I believe a hyper-masculine culture plays a large part in the rise of aggressive behaviour. Some people think it is impressive to be overly aggressive & confrontational & a cultural shift is required to combat this.
- Improved cooperative efforts between Liquor & Gaming, police & venues. Often venues cautious about involving police in arising incidents until they escalate due to fear of further licensing restriction etc. While it is important that venues that disregard RSA laws are held accountable venues & licensing officers should feel like team mates not adversaries in the fight against alcohol related incidents.

I believe that the removal of the lockout laws & service restrictions in their current state & implementation of these measures will help to minimise the negative effects of alcohol consumption while helping to reinvigorate Sydney's nightlife. Nightlife plays a huge part in Sydney's culture & our reputation both Australia wide & internationally as a global city & strongly believe the impacts of these laws have done more damage than they have prevented.

-Zac Sinclair

