

**Submission  
No 427**

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

**Name:** Name suppressed  
**Date Received:** 1 July 2019

Partially  
Confidential

Dear Members of the Parliament,

As a recent transplant to Sydney from New York City, nightlife is something of great importance to me. And as an immigrant, I know that voices such as mine are not often counted among the diverse population of this beautiful, international city. But in coming from a world that has managed to balance nightlife and public safety for over forty years, it has been a jarring and disheartening experience to see Sydney's nightlife minimized and nearly extinguished by the overreach and intrusion of lockout laws.

First and foremost, I acknowledge that New York and Sydney are two amazing but different metropolitan areas, yet both are distinguished by their status as international bastions of culture and entertainment. During my time in New York, I enjoyed the freedom of moving from venue to venue without the fear of being "locked out". I also knew that security was present, and safety was a top concern of most establishments, but never did I feel as if I was being "policed" or under surveillance. I was also never questioned at the door, save for necessary pat downs and common security measures.

Yet in my time in Sydney, I have witnessed and experienced a disturbing culture of overreach and a form of policing that is highly intrusive. Without going into my personal life, I choose not to drink often, limiting myself to one cocktail or drink on any night when I "go out". However, I have been stopped at the door and questioned—an experience that, to a transplant is concerning enough, but inconceivable to most international tourists. While I can understand the need to turn away people who might be in excessive states, the level of scrutiny present at most bars is demoralizing and creates an environment of intense policing. I have thus been fortunate enough not to have encountered "stop-and-frisk" and strip search checkpoints, which have waylaid and inconvenienced passersby who were not even attending the venues in question. To any outsider, this resembles a police state. And yet for most Sydneysiders, this is now an unfortunate norm. I am also fortunate in that I am a white, English speaking male, and therefore not subjugated to what I imagine is a disproportionate amount of policing against people of color (which I equally imagine includes a fair amount of indigenous citizens).

In the eyes of the world--and if I may borrow a colloquialism--this is "not a good look," Sydney.

I understand that the lockout laws came about because of an incident in which an act of senseless violence called into question the "image" Sydney was projecting. Yet New York City does not typically see an uptick in crimes related to nightlife. In fact, "Although the population has grown from 8 million in 2000 to 8.6 million in 2018, crime has declined...NYC's nightlife thrives today, in part, because it is relatively safe for patrons and professionals to venture out at night to participate in nightlife."\* Sydney is already "safer" than New York, and yet nightlife regulations are as restrictive as ever.

In 2017, New York City passed legislation to create an office of nightlife, as one of many branches in the municipal government. The office works to support the "nearly 300,000 jobs...generating \$35.1 billion in economic impact," by "coordinating City services and programs to promote responsible growth, diversity, creativity, inclusion, and quality of life for all New Yorkers and visitors from around the world." New York is not alone in this endeavor. Major international cities such as Amsterdam, London, Paris, and Berlin "have yielded social benefits such as reductions in noise complaints, and healthier, more productive nighttime economies."\*\* Sydney is no less deserving of a governance that seeks to prioritize safety as well as ensure revenue. Why is this not something worth examining? New York City has just hosted World Pride, a major, international LGBTQ+ event that draws artists and entertainers from the world over, and generates a huge amount of tourism revenue. Sydney is currently trying to put in a bid to host World Pride in 2023. But I can scarcely imagine what it would be like for people to come from the world over and have to encounter the heavy restrictions and lockout laws currently present. Most tourists coming to Australia and Sydney simply do not know about the "nightlife problem" and lockout controversies, until they arrive. To draw a pop cultural comparison, does Sydney want to be known on the international stage as the city that looks more like the town from "Footloose"?

My hope is that my perspective, among the chorus of other Sydneysiders demanding review of the current laws, will bring about a rewrite to the laws currently in effect. If major world cities are capable of curtailing violence and implementing a safe, thriving, and economically viable nightlife culture, then what is stopping Sydney? And if Sydney loses its entertainment and cultural value, then what is the point of even calling ourselves an international city?

\* <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/mome/pdf/ESI-NYCEDC-Nightlife-Report-2018.pdf>

\*\* <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/mome/nightlife/nightlife.page>