

**Submission
No 669**

SYDNEY'S NIGHT TIME ECONOMY

Name: Mr Mick Comerford

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To Whom This May Concern;

As the General Manager of a venue (currently in The Rocks area), I have been managing venues in Sydney for 12 years. I've also managed venues in Darling Harbour too ranging from bars, bistros, nightclubs, restaurants and pubs with hotels. This sounds like I've moved around a lot, but I've actually only worked in three different venues (4 years, 3 years and 5 years). All have been in strong tourist destinations of Sydney. I'm currently working in a venue with a capacity of over 400 where weekend trade is our peak trading period. We also hold 3-4 large scale events (cultural, community, festival, sporting) each year with capacities ranging from 1200 to 2000.

I must say, working with the various stakeholders (police, council, Liquor and Gaming) has become a lot easier as they seem more understanding and cooperative. This was not always the case. For some time after the lockout laws were introduced in 2014 I felt like a criminal for simply being involved in the liquor industry, like it was something "bad" and caused so many dramas, like it was all the venue manger's or owners fault if things got out of hand. Police didn't want to give the fine (Fail to Quit) to the individual. I felt like our industry governing body was "out to get us" rather than work with us in the, particularly with education and training.

As a venue, we do our best when it comes to finding the balance between offering great hospitality and fun experiences while also teaching and reminding all our guests and visitors of the current state laws. As a venue, I believe we are responsible from promoting this great city. Not just the city though - I believe we have a responsibility to showcase our precinct (historic, cultural), city (beautiful, diverse) state and country (vast, inspiring). I would like to see us recognised in the role we play for tourism in this city, state and country. Although I do believe this has been changing already, it is clear our drinking and dining culture has changed over the recent years of the "lockout" period. It's not all to do with lockouts but things have certainly changed, in and around Sydney anyway.

I'm not going to get into statistics (domestic and non-domestic violence) as we are all aware of these. I want to talk about what I would like to see changing. I would remove the fear from the bartender (serving that 5th drink as the clock ticks past midnight). I want the venue managers to feel safe and confident to call the police for assistance when they need backup and not worry about the venue record (violent venues list). I would to remove all confusion about when I can enter a licenced venue (past 1.30/2am). I would like to remove all confusion (particularly from our tourists) about the type of drink that can be ordered past midnight. I would like to see venues that operate well rewarded (later licence application possibility). I would like to see support from the state government for live music and late-night city vibrancy, not just on the weekends. I would like to see better late-night transport. I would like to see more onus put back on the person that is violent or quarrelsome. The city is just better equipped for this.

The city has changed and we should change with it.

In summary, I would like to see the state government along with industry bodies and stakeholders to invest in our late night economy and remove all restrictions past midnight (drink restrictions and 1.30am/2am lockouts). I would like to see better considerations for venues that operate live music and venues that would like to trade later (past 3am/3.30am).

I would like to be proud, love and enjoy the industry I work in again.

Thanks for taking the time to ready this.

Kind regards,

Mick Comerford