

**Submission
No 572**

SYDNEY'S NIGHT TIME ECONOMY

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To whom it may concern,

This is a formal submission to the Joint Select Committee who are undertaking a review of Sydney's night-time economy.

I am a 46 year old professional architect, married, with two young daughters. We live in an apartment in Elizabeth Bay, just down the road from Kings Cross. I have lived in the Potts Point, Kings Cross, Darlinghurst area since 1998 and have spent my adult life enjoying the vibrant nightlife of the area.

I am dismayed by the widespread closures of nightclubs, music venues, restaurants, bars and other night time businesses in Kings Cross and Oxford Street; closures as a direct result of the lock out law implementation. Shops sit empty and even the retail components of the new apartment blocks that have sprung up sit empty.

I see a direct link between business closures and the introduction of the so-called lock-out laws. The many establishments that once supported a myriad of dining options, music styles and associated cultures are closed. Already, older buildings which once housed dance floors and arts and culture space are being redeveloped into apartments; once tightly packed vibrant and viable performance venue spaces to be lost forever to basement car parking.

I support measures that allow business to flourish, that allow people freedom from curfews and a heavy government hand. I support measures that diffuse situations that allow alcohol related violence to occur; such as a diverse night life comprising retail, markets, art galleries, 24/7 public transport, and, importantly a community policing model rather than the aggressive policing behaviours we often see.

I think much of the trouble we witnessed in the lead up to the prominent assaults were a result of 'pre-loading' where kids are able to obtain less expensive alcohol from bottle shops (Coles and Woolworths) then emerge from Kings Cross station at 7pm totally out of control.

The lock-out laws are a poorly designed blunt policy instrument that affects the majority, rather than targeting the minority of individuals involved in violent or anti-social behaviour. The majority in a city the size of Sydney are not simply a narrow age group of misunderstood youth who exhibit similar social behaviours; they are a broad age group of people who enjoy a vast array of mainstream cultures and sub-cultures.

The lock-out measures have effectively shut down the night life of this city. Imagine closing the economic output of Martin Place each day at lunch time.

I am concerned about the 1.30am lock-out that applies inequitably to certain areas of the city and not others; notably Barangaroo & the Star City Casino. I believe the 1.30am lock-out has had a profoundly negative effect on the viability of a vibrant night time economy; a negative effect on the viability of music and arts venues booking multiple acts per night; a negative effect on the viability of music and arts venues booking commercially risky younger musicians; a negative effect on the viability of bar and club hopping; a negative effect on the viability of mature late night dining options; a negative effect on the viability of a vibrant global city which tourists and locals are drawn in to enjoy.

Our Sydney, our 5 million person global city must support a diverse 24/7 offering of services, commercial activity, culture and the arts. I support 24/7 transport that can effortlessly disperse crowds at the end of their nights out.

I support a merit based licensing system which incentivises best practice service of alcohol and venue management; without necessitating adults turning into children using plastic cups after midnight. I support community policing and police who behave as humans and who engage with business owners and the public to jointly identify trouble; I even support CCTV if it actually works.

I support the implementation of a Sydney Night Mayor, similar to the role in Amsterdam, one who has the ear of government, police, business owners and public.

I support Agent of Change planning policies, such as those in Melbourne, to protect existing live music venues from newer residential neighbours. I support crowd management measures such as those designed and used during the Olympic Games.

I support broader efforts to ban alcohol advertising in sport, in newspaper 4 page spreads, in targeting alcohol at teenagers, to dealing with social and cultural inclusion rather than exclusion in daily political rhetoric.

I caught up with two old friends a month ago in Kings Cross. We, all 46 years of age, had dinner together and decided on a night cap. It was 10,30pm and not one establishment would permit our entry without a drivers licence and our photographs and identity recorded by Orwellian machines monitored by bored staff closing down for the night. One didn't have his drivers licence and had to go home. It was a sad indictment on the state of play in what was once a thriving area.

I've attended many Keep Sydney Open rallies with my now 7 year old daughter. I hope we can establish smart, positive policy settings to establish a safe and vibrant night economy not only for her parents but for her and her friends when she grows up.

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