

**Submission
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SYDNEY'S NIGHT TIME ECONOMY

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In Australia, we have a tremendous opportunity to observe and adopt the best policies from around the world. Yet when it comes to night life in Sydney we've gone off script, bringing in policing and heavy handed security requirements, even for the most benign and socially positive events.

I can understand that the police have quotas to meet in terms of prosecutions. I can understand that the security industry is making a lot of money out of the new regulations. But heavy handed security measures and over-policing of otherwise benign events does not help protect us from ourselves, or prevent drug use, it creates an environment where what was once discussed in the open to one where people are afraid to seek help.

I have lived all around the world. Tokyo, London, NYC, Berlin. Not for me personally. In Germany in particular, if their friends overdose, they will call the ambulance and then leave them alone on the street to be picked up for fear of reprisal. It was seeing this that I more fully appreciated the Australian approach of not prosecuting people who have ingested drugs to reduce the fear of seeking emergency and/or medical assistance.

How times have changed, then, when I see sniffer dogs at train stations with curtained off temporary strip search booths.

What's next? Prosecuting people in hospital beds?

I understand that everyone makes mistakes, people get caught up in the wrong crowd, otherwise good people are peer pressured into doing things they wouldn't ordinarily do. But the kind of over policing and hard line enforcement on users can only serve to do more harm in an already precarious situation.

Decriminalisation, pill-testing, harm minimisation. None of these things mean normalisation, as we have often heard from the Premier. What they do is to defuse that precarious situation and open them up to allow the community to access these situations directly. Harm minimisation policy in other countries, especially in contrast to the current hard line approach, has always seen a reduction in drug use and drug related harm, not an increase. If we close our ears to the problem and try to solve it with sniffer dogs and strip searches, we remove our ability for front-line conversations with the most vulnerable and the most adversely affected: the users, while the dealers remain out of reach.

If this government was serious about solving the problem, they would know this. And if they know this and continue in wilful ignorance, then they are more concerned with quotas and funding than the lives of the people they are supposed to be protecting, and are actively exploiting these people for profit.

We have tried this way, and more kids are dying than ever before. It's time to try something new. Something proven and effective. And that something is proper front-line pill-testing, harm minimisation, decriminalisation.