

**Submission  
No 720**

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

**Name:** Name suppressed  
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Partially  
Confidential

To whom it may concern

I write this short submission from the perspective of someone who enjoyed heading out for a dance on the weekend; until the lockout laws and related regulations were introduced.

I have experienced first hand the impact the lockout laws have had in Newcastle - where they were first introduced - and Sydney. Newcastle had a vibrant nightlife. We would start our night at Customs Hotel and would invariably end up at the Newcastle icon, Fanny's nightclub. People were everywhere. The place was buzzing. Similarly in Sydney, when I first started enjoying Oxford St, the place had a great vibe and was the envy of the world in terms of nightlife. We could choose what pub or club we wanted to go to, meet different friends at different places without fear of being locked out, and go to clubs that could support subcultures that didn't fit into the mainstream, such as drag. We were always guaranteed a good night out because there were so many different types of people and there was so much diversity in choice.

Now, Newcastle and Sydney feel more like a retirement village than cities that value diversity, fun and culture. We are no longer guaranteed a good night out. There are only a few good clubs and they, and the businesses that surround them, remain stagnant. The lockout laws and other related regulations prevent them from growing and prevent the growth of the broader night time economy. Sydney has lost its reputation as a leader of night time culture. Newcastle doesn't really have a nightlife. I am sometimes embarrassed when international friends visit expecting a fun and dynamic night time experience, but instead get a deflated and monocultural one.

Nobody wants to experience violence. Surprisingly, in the 13 years I have been going out I have only seen a handful of skirmishes. That's not to say they do not happen. In Newcastle, we knew where not to go, and, in Sydney, I rarely went to Kings Cross. But the impact of the lockout laws - introduced in a hammer like fashion to curb alcohol fuelled violence - have been devastating for people who, like me, enjoy the pub and club scene.

I have just recently visited London and Europe. I've left wondering why we can't embrace what night life has to offer like the Europeans. London and Paris were buzzing into the early hours of the morning. People were enjoying themselves drinking in the streets, dancing or listening to music. Parisians were drinking and having picnics on the canals and in the park, socialising with friends to cool off after a long day. As I walked passed I thought: in Sydney, there would be a local compliance officer telling them they couldn't drink alcohol there. This has happened to me and my friends multiple times when we were peacefully having a glass of wine in the park near the beach.

Why can't Sydney (and Newcastle) strive to be more like Paris and London? It may have something to do with government telling us that we can only drink certain types of alcohol up until certain times, or that we can't stand up to drink when we are near the beach, or that we can't play music too loud at 10pm for fear of getting a noise complaint, or that we can't dance in the street, or that we can't drink in the park, or that we can't go to dance at a club at a certain time. No wonder Sydney has the global reputation of being a nanny state. The lockout laws are a product of a view that we can regulate our problems away, regardless of the impact. Regulation can be a powerful tool to achieve social and other outcomes, but in this context the lock out laws seem to have the sole outcome to stifle night time economic growth, competition and culture.

I think the key question for the committee to consider is: do the lockout laws strike the right balance between encouraging night time culture and growth with the need to prevent violence? Good policy interventions aim to strike the balance between competing priorities and interests. For me, the lock out laws and other regulations have not achieved that balance. They should be repealed in whole, but restrictions on the consumption of alcohol after 3am could be in place, noting the communities concern around alcohol fuelled violence.

Thanks for taking the time to read my submission.