

**Submission
No 596**

SYDNEY'S NIGHT TIME ECONOMY

Name: Mr Rich Sanford

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To Whom It May Concern,

Thank you for taking the time to review my submission to the inquiry into Sydney's lockout laws and their effect on night-time economy. As a professional musician since 1993 I have experienced first-hand the distinct changes in Sydney's entertainment culture over the last few years. I have been in the somewhat unique position of having made almost the entirety of my living from playing and producing music, and a good portion of that livelihood has come from my involvement in Sydney's live music offerings (both original and covers-based performances).

Throughout the 1990's and into the 2000's I was in the happy position of working 5 to 6 nights a week. On weekend nights (Friday and Saturday) it would be commonplace to have up to 3 gigs in a single night. To give you an idea of how much that has changed, I currently don't have any gigs booked in the next 6 weeks. I currently make the bulk of my income from producing & mixing music for other artists. I'm fortunate to have been able to adapt to these changes and my livelihood has not suffered significantly due to that adaptation. Many of my fellow musicians have not been so fortunate and have been forced to change careers entirely. A handful of my peers used the vigorous night-time culture of the late 90s and early 2000s as a springboard into healthy careers as original artists. I don't see that happening anywhere in the "live scene" at the moment.

In terms of the landscape of night-time culture, there has been a distinct shift away from diversity and breadth of options. I've seen a healthy live scene turn into a comparative wasteland. What has cropped up is a vast array of quiet, "in-the-corner"-type acoustic duo and trio gigs. These tend to start early, finish by say 8pm and seem to be a desperate attempt by some cafe/restaurant venue owners to add some life to their customers' dining experiences. It's a shame that once these customers have finished their meals with a quiet acoustic duo in the background, there are no other options to continue on their evening.

With train services that do not operate 24 hours a day, venues forced to shut early due to the lockout laws, and many many punters funnelled into the Star City Casino area as the only night-time "entertainment" option, Sydney's night-time culture has been throttled to near extinction. Surely the backbone of a healthy economy is opening up options, giving customers choice. Currently there are very few choices, and those choices that do exist quite obviously benefit and serve a very small group of wealthy stakeholders.

I am fully in favour of reducing alcohol-induced violence. But I don't believe the answer lies in restricting customer choice. I believe it lies in exactly the opposite. There are ways of punishing and cracking down on particular poorly-managed venues without restricting the entire night-time economy. Strict enforcement of rules around the safe consumption of alcohol is obviously vital. But the enforcement and punishment of those few venues/customers who do not comply does not (and should not) have to include imposing unnecessary restriction on everyone. A thriving night-time economy and culture relies on the ability of customers to choose.

Thanks for taking the time to review my thoughts and I hope my perspective has been some use.

Regards,

Rich