

**Submission
No 558**

SYDNEY'S NIGHT TIME ECONOMY

Name: Name suppressed
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Partially
Confidential

To the Joint Select Committee on Sydney's night time economy,

I write as a resident of Potts Point (Springfield Avenue, close to King's Cross) and organiser of a music event to express my support for Sydney's night time economy and my opposition to the current "lock-out" laws and licensing restrictions in Sydney's CBD and King's Cross.

By way of further background, I co-organise a "battle of the bands" [REDACTED] at the Oxford Art Factory at least once a year since 2015. Our event is always on a week night and typically finishes around 11pm and as such we are not directly affected by the licensing restrictions. However, we are participating in the night time economy and organising an event at which depends on having a venue available close to the CBD to host us. I am concerned that the impact of the lock-out laws threatens the future of those venues, and more generally the impact on nightlife in an otherwise modern vibrant city.

Others are more qualified than me to present the statistics about the impact of the licensing restrictions on alcohol-related violence and on the local economy, and on the surrounding suburbs in Sydney. I will make a few observations.

Prior to the introduction of the lock-out laws, Darlinghurst Road on a typical Saturday evening was packed with drunk young people, but in that respect not so different to major cities in the UK and France in which I have previously lived, where people happily move from bar to bar until 6am. Alcohol abuse is undoubtedly a problem in modern society, but as long as consumption of alcohol remains legal (arguably, lucrative, for government) and socially acceptable, the issue of drunkenness should not be confused with that of a culture of aggression and violence in young men. If alcohol abuse in NSW is the nut, the application of the lock-out laws in the CBD and King's Cross is a peculiarly specific sledgehammer. In the immediate aftermath of the restrictions, there were reports of increased violence in Double Bay and Bondi, suggesting the problem had just been moved down out of the spotlight.

I acknowledge that King's Cross had become a focus for a particular type of aggressive behaviour and obviously do not condone the acts that led to the deaths of two young men earlier this decade. However, I do not consider that the lock-out laws were a proportionate or adequate response. Five years later, the number of empty units on Darlinghurst Road and the surrounding streets is startling, calling to mind high streets in towns suffering the effects of recession. Even in the last couple of years, new coffee shops and restaurants have not been able to survive, and the units under the new Woolworths stand empty. Yet some are still arguing that these restrictions remain necessary. The fact is that the huge nightclubs and strip clubs of The Cross have gone – and perhaps their time was up anyway, out of step, unfashionable. Repealing the lock-out laws will not bring those venues back, but would open the door for something different.

Sydney's residents and visitors alike deserve to have access to an enjoyable night time economy and culture when they want it, without being told when to go to bed. Repeal of the lock-out laws and the responsible service of alcohol policies can co-exist. The Cross needs a new lease of life, and that includes nightlife.

Thank you.

Kind regards,
[REDACTED]