

**Submission
No 659**

SYDNEY'S NIGHT TIME ECONOMY

Organisation: Mary's Group

Date Received: 9 July 2019

Submission

Parliamentary Inquiry

Dear Sir\Madam,

As a UK expat that moved to this great city almost 10 years ago, I come with an image of Sydney painted from afar. A city where I had first heard of the term "shooting gallery". I was blown away by such a progressive way of thinking, far removed from what I had experienced growing up in Scotland. Now after 10 years here it has been a sad tale of watching its steady decline into a scantily populated city centre and what could be described as a cultural black hole, arrested by its own implementation of excessive legislation. Legislation that has cast much doubt over its purpose. The declining and much talked about statistics around violence are of no surprise in an area of a decimated twilight population. This submission is not about painting a sad picture, we all know what the economy down there is doing, very little. We all know that violence has dropped, that businesses have failed and the once booming tourism trade, has lost its appeal. This is about the hard working, proud citizens and residents who wish to talk proudly and enthusiastically about their home. Who don't give an awkward smile when a foreign friend asks them what's good to do in the city at night.

It may come as no surprise to learn that my work and livelihood is rooted in the night time economy of Sydney. In April 2013 my best mate\business partner and I opened up Mary's in Newtown. A small bar and restaurant that changed our lives significantly. It was extremely busy and we served thousands of people very quickly. Watching the happiness that ensued with our customers sticks firmly in our memories and cemented the idea that food, drink and music can absolutely contribute to community, culture, relationships and a positive energy that is hard to achieve in many aspects of life. We worked our arses off with a humility, generosity and empathy because we take our industry seriously and our responsibilities around it, very seriously. We have used the same old fashioned formula and carried that into our other venues that we have been lucky enough to take on. These include iconic Sydney venues like The Unicorn Hotel in Paddington, The Lansdowne Hotel in Chippendale and most recently Mary's Underground, previously, and much more widely known as The Basement. We have dedicated our professional lives to the night life and culture of Sydney, and feel at points that we are fighting against the city itself to create venues that the residents seem to be screaming out for. We are treated as guilty and unprofessional from the get go and it's up to us to prove the city wrong, not that we ever will. We have taken the option to not include pokies in any of our venues, due to the catastrophic effects of gambling on mental health, domestic violence and suicide. This makes keeping these venues afloat almost an impossible task. All the time whilst watching the city direct is drinkers and diners into the casino, due to their absurd exemption from the rules that govern us more respectable but less financially inflicting business owners.

The world is a different place now than when these rules came into place. The once notoriously violent taxi ranks are no longer populated due to the arrival of services such as Uber. The youth of today are drinking less and less, they're considerate, they're vegan, they're concerned about their futures and the opportunities that it holds. They're persecuted for the actions of a previous generation I, as are the businesses. I implore you to rethink and rediscover what Sydney is and what it's residents want it to be. We want to be a player on the international scene. We want to deliver world beating bars and restaurants in a safe, inclusive and creative environment. We want not to be treated as violent alcoholics who don't understand what it means to behave. We want the freedom and support of our Councils and Government to be allowed to do this. Loosen the shackles and allow us to make you proud, make the residents proud and fill the visitors with envy. We've got what it takes, we just need a political climate to help us get there and revitalise this flailing night time economy .

Regards

Kenny Graham



Owner and Operator of **Mary's Newtown, Mary's CBD, The Unicorn Hotel, The Lansdowne Hotel, P&V Wine and Liquor, Mary's Circular Quay, Mary's Underground, Cherry Moon General Store.**