

**Submission
No 658**

SYDNEY'S NIGHT TIME ECONOMY

Organisation: Lion Beer Australia

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Joint Select Committee on Sydney's nighttime economy
New South Wales Parliament
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

9 July 2019

Dear Joint Select Committee Members

Sydney's night time economy

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into the Committee's inquiry into Sydney's nighttime economy.

As a major brewer and beverage producer, Lion employs over 1,190 people in New South Wales. As a major employer and alcohol producer, we feel we have a responsibility to contribute to the discussion around Sydney's night time economy.

Lion believes that lockouts and associated regulatory restrictions should be removed or significantly rebalanced. The goals of the laws remain valid, but there are better ways to achieve them.

We welcome working with the Government and the broader community to address these goals in a meaningful way.

The current suite of restrictions that are broadly referred to as "lockout laws", have had a limited impact on violence and anti-social behaviour, diverting attention and resources from the true drivers of this behaviour.

We believe that addressing the true drivers of anti-social behaviour will lead to significantly better outcomes, while at the same time supporting a vibrant night time economy in Sydney.

Understanding behaviour in the night time economy

To appropriately regulate anti-social behavior, it is important to understand its causes. In 2015, Dr Anne Fox produced an anthropological study on understanding behavior in the Australian and New Zealand night-time economies, *Understanding behaviour in the Australian and New Zealand night-time economies: an anthropological study*

T +61 2 9320 2200
F +61 2 9320 2264
W www.lionco.com

Lion
Level 7
68 York Street
Sydney
NSW 2000
Australia

Locked Bag 14
Royal Exchange
Sydney
NSW 1225
Australia

Lion Beer Australia
ABN 13 008 596 370



Dr Fox found that in the aftermath of tragedies the public debate has often focused on what happened and when, rather than why. It is worth quoting Dr Fox's motivation in her own words, before outlining the results of her research:

"There is no escaping the fact that recent deaths recorded in the night-time economy in New South Wales, Australia have been horrific. The names and photographs of the victims are etched in our memories and we owe it to them and their families to investigate the underlying drivers of this violence..."

...It is unlikely we will achieve real and positive change in the drinking culture until we have a better understanding of what is driving it" (Fox, 2015, p. 5)

Dr Fox's report addresses the "why" of violence in the night time economy.

Through a process of anthropological field research using a wide variety of methods, Dr Fox and her team of researchers established that there were three main drivers of violence in the night-time economy:

1. Violent individuals: While more research is required, Fox concludes that there is significant evidence that a small proportion of violent men in the population are responsible for a significant portion of the violence.
2. Violent cultures: Cultural reinforcers of violence, misogyny, and aggressive masculinity can increase the appeal of poor behaviour.
3. Violent situations: Issues like poor venue design and a lack of appropriate transport options can lead to violent outcomes.

Alcohol and violence

The Fox report makes several observations regarding the relationship between alcohol and violence. These observations include:

- There is no simple causal relationship between alcohol and violent behaviour;
- There is no evidence that, for most normal, healthy individuals, the presence of alcohol in the brain results, in, encourages, or unleashes violence;
- Alcohol can, in some cultures and situations, be a facilitator of aggression if aggression is there to begin with, both in the individual and the cultural environment. It does not produce it where it does not already exist; and
- The disinhibiting and anxiety-reducing effects of alcohol lead to pro-social behaviour more often than violence. The connection between violence remains a minority one.



Appropriately balanced regulatory arrangements

Based on the work on Dr Fox, and other available research, Lion has the following recommendations for the Committee's consideration:

1. The lockout laws, and attendant restrictions, should be fully or materially removed – Anne Fox's work provides some excellent recommendations as to how positive social and cultural change can be effected.
2. Venue restrictions, including on hours of operations and drinks served, among others, should be imposed along a spectrum of risk – the system should support good venues
3. Assessments of venue performance in providing a safe environment should be made with reference to their relative size (both physically and financially) – as larger and busier venues would naturally have more activity, venue performance should be assessed on a per capita basis
4. Assessments of venue performance in providing a safe environment should consider the severity of historical incidents that have occurred at the venue
5. Restrictions on takeaway sales should be removed – there is no evidence that these have been successful, while they inconvenience many of those who do not work 'business' hours
6. More diversity should be supported in late night precincts, including food options, festivals, markets, late night trading, live music and various other options – late night precincts should be about more than just licensed premises

Yours faithfully

Sam Barr
Government Relations Manager
Lion Australia

Attachment: Fox, A. (2015) *Understanding behaviour in the Australian and New Zealand night-time economies: an anthropological study*, Lion, Sydney.