

**Submission
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SYDNEY'S NIGHT TIME ECONOMY

Organisation: Councillors Christine Forster and Craig Chung

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SUBMISSION TO THE JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON SYDNEY'S NIGHT TIME ECONOMY BY CITY OF SYDNEY COUNCILLORS CHRISTINE FORSTER AND CRAIG CHUNG

The lockout laws and other licence restrictions imposed in the Sydney CBD Entertainment Precinct in 2014 have served their purpose.

It is now time the laws were repealed in order to ensure Sydney's night time economy can again make a full contribution to employment and wealth creation and its reputation as one of the world's great global cities.

There can be no doubt that when the lockout laws were introduced in 2014 alcohol-fuelled violence on our streets, particularly in Kings Cross, was spiralling out of control. The tragic deaths of two young men after one-punch assaults in Victoria Street made it obvious that a circuit breaker was needed.

The laws, which locked patrons out of venues after 1:30am and ensured last drinks at 3:00am, had an immediate and dramatic impact, reducing the numbers of revellers visiting Kings Cross on Friday and Saturday nights from an estimated 30,000 to around half as many. That factor alone would explain the subsequent – and very welcome - drop in the incidents of assault and anti-social behaviour in the area.

In parallel with the lockout laws, high-risk venues were required to scan IDs after 9.00pm and bars across the city centre were given restrictions on glassware, serving limits and bans on shot drinks after midnight.

Five years on, it is clear these laws have had the desired effect of breaking the cycle of criminal behaviour in our entertainment precincts, but they have also taken an immense toll on the city's late-night economy.

Kings Cross is now a shadow of the world-famous late-night precinct it was for decades, with dozens of bars, restaurants and daytime businesses driven out by the massive decline in patronage and revenue.

In Darlinghurst, Oxford Street, once a safe and bustling 24-hour economy, is now littered with empty shopfronts and restaurants.

And in the CBD, an overseas visitor is unable to order a single whiskey or a cocktail in the bar of an international hotel at one minute past midnight.

These are the obvious impacts, but the less noticeable ones have been the negative effects on employment, live entertainment and vibrancy - losses which were acknowledged by the Callinan Review of the laws in 2016.

In order to mitigate these impacts, the State Government should:

- Repeal the existing lockout laws and other licence restrictions which currently apply across the Sydney CBD Entertainment Precinct
- Adopt a case-by-case approach under which the current restrictions are only applied to venues which are found to be in breach of the law
- Review ID scanning requirements for licenced venues which have changed use and should no longer be categorised as high risk

- Review the provision of late-night public transport services from Kings Cross, Oxford Street and the CBD

- Ensure that the law enforcement agencies with jurisdiction over both liquor licencing and public safety have adequate resources and powers.

Sydney is currently enjoying an unprecedented period of renewal, with the new International Convention Centre attracting significant numbers of domestic and international visitors, and Barangaroo establishing itself as an exciting new destination of choice. In the next few years central Sydney will be further revitalised with the start-up of the new light rail and metro lines, harbourside redevelopments such as Darling Square and the Fish Markets, and significant cultural projects like the Walsh Bay Arts Precinct and Sydney Modern extension to the Art Gallery of NSW.

Sydney has grown up as a global city and we should now be showing Australia and the world that our central entertainment precincts are once again safe, cultural, vibrant and open for business.