

**Submission
No 751**

SYDNEY'S NIGHT TIME ECONOMY

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My name is Tom Hogan - I'm a Sydney music artist and producer and educator, and I'm responding to the Nightlife enquiry, I've seen the Lockout laws have a direct impact on myself, and my peers, colleagues, and the wider industry, both at home and interstate.

Immediately after the Lockout laws were put into place, there was a major impact on gig and live venue attendance, in both music, theatre, and nightlife contexts. Less venues and performances were offered, less opportunities to perform, even less chance to reach audiences. Regardless, not being able to include a gig or performance as part of a night out in the city areas simply halted attendance. As a consequence of this, compromises were often made, and workarounds were quickly put in place, mostly because artists found ways to be resourceful. Alternative venues far outside the city area popped up, temporary venues, and unorthodox spaces were created, but always under the snare of compromise, often with less security and other amenities nearby.

Artists and musicians and audiences got angrier, and protests were extremely well attended. The protests heightened in urgency and tension, spurred by the lockout laws, responding to arts funding cuts, and government decisions about the behaviours of attendees of arts and music events. These protests got more tense, more urgent, more dangerous, and were crushing to the younger artistic generation, and weighed heavier on more established artists.

Interstate, in my experience, Sydney's arts scene was consistently brought up as a joke, in comparison to, for example, Perth, Melbourne and Adelaide's. Less touring and performance opportunities meant less interstate and international artists turning up. The other cities flourished with artistic life - other cities would promote exclusive events, driving audiences away from Sydney's scene. And amongst all this, Sydney was always the butt of a joke. Many artists I knew moved. I rarely went to an event where Sydney's emptiness wasn't brought up.

As a lecturer in Sydney, teaching music history to 18-25 year olds studying bachelor degrees in performance and audio engineering, most were already dismayed at the opportunities their own city offered them. Again, Sydney was the butt of a joke, a land without opportunity, and this was by students who hadn't experienced the city as professionals yet.

I also sought work elsewhere. Since the lockout laws, I've had more opportunities interstate than ever before, and Sydney didn't offer any opportunities as a performer or creator. This is my home town, I shouldn't be living here and looking fondly at other cities. I should be proud of the Nightlife, and experiences that can be had here. I should be able to provide hopeful opportunities to my students. I should be able to point them in the direction of countless events that they should attend, and get involved in, rather than asking them to wait, or to finish their degrees and move away. I should be able to rely on a home crowd, I should be able to have a following in my own area. I shouldn't feel my own city is a wasteland. The Lockout Law areas seem eerily like a dystopian B-grade movie or a budget Film Noir, where they couldn't afford extras, or a sense of a city. It's just empty streets, and no sense that anyone is enjoying themselves.

There are many problems in the arts industry at the moment, across many mediums. And the lockout laws felt like a real turning point. Where it no longer felt like a limitation for artists making work, but also for audiences attending work. Plenty of other people will be able to phrase this whole thing better than me. Hopefully many are. Repealing the lockout laws is a huge step in the right direction. That there is a trust in audiences and artists and people to be able to experience their city, and not to be hiding it, and not to be looking elsewhere. Reverse the laws, then we can all go out for a beer, and start discussing the next steps. Let us celebrate somewhere other than just our living rooms. Allow this city to feel lived in, rather than empty, and sad, and dark.