

Hi,

I am writing to you in relation to the enforced NSW lock out laws that came into effect across Newcastle in 2008. Being of a young age, 20, that regularly attends Newcastle's most popular venues, I think it has not only made the city (of which I grew up in) seem 'lifeless' and 'unattractive' with significant impacts on the tourism industry but also hit hard at the local businesses of the Newcastle region, which is striving to become a city of major growth and potential. While the city tries to encourage tourists from the surrounding areas and abroad to visit and experience our culture, it limits them to a perception of Newcastle being a "nanny" town that's in bed by 7 and restricting access to the night life that can be explored.

As statistics show, the dramatic increase of assaults shown in the BOSCAR data claims that Newcastle rose by 21% between 2009 and 2011 (after the laws were introduced), and all "incidents of non-domestic assault on licensed premises between 2008 and 2015 fell by 51.4 per cent in the Newcastle council area, they also fell by 45 per cent across NSW", even in places that don't have these laws. Does this not go to show that lockout and liquor laws aren't a way to combat alcohol fueled violence in Newcastle's CBD? There are two sides to this, and the NCC (Newcastle City Council), in my opinion, is only taking into account what they think is best for the city, which is in turn, becoming a detriment to Newcastle and their reputation. Can you honestly tell me that the people deciding the fate of Newcastle's liquor laws are (by my guess) people that are gaining second hand information and creating restrictions based on one persons' actions, which is therefore ruining it for not just the younger generation, but all residents and visitors of this great city? I am telling you, I have experienced the real reasons why violence occurs, and to some extent yes, it can be alcohol induced, but the common reasons are drugs, the overcrowding of clubs and pubs and the lack of police presence. I often get told stories of when my father-in-law (now 50) would spend his late teens to early twenties in the old nightclubs, some of which were opened until around 5/6am and others that didn't even shut! He explained to me that "violence was everywhere, doesn't matter which city, or what part of the world you were in, there was always going to be violence of some form. Not all of this was alcohol infused violence, but the significant difference was the decrease in how often it happened. Due to the substantial police presence in the streets, in the clubs and as well as on the road, a lot of people were just out to have a good time, and if they were out causing trouble, the nearby law enforcers were there to eradicate the problem, without ruining it for everyone". I have experienced enjoying a night out, not keeping track of the time and suddenly you're being shoved out of the club onto the street along with the other 200 angry, drunk people, which in turn causes them to argue and possibly start a fight. It is these actions in which we should be preventing if we lifted the lockout laws, to which the people who were doing the right thing could stay out and have a good night, and the ones doing the wrong thing would be evicted from the premises. I do agree that having a limit on how many drinks you can get in one transaction is a good point, but in saying that, it's a way to limit without having to restrict. Making an unthought out law to try and prevent violence isn't creating a solution, I mean isn't it within the bar staff's, the securities and the all managements job description to ensure that the

responsible service of alcohol is being met under the qualifications they hold to maintain their position? I believe that there should be more responsibility taken by the premises owners and the bar staff at these venues, as it is primarily their job to provide responsible service of alcohol. At the end of the day, they have the qualifications to prevent this, yet the money flow changes their attitude. I have consistently witnessed the ongoing issue of people's friends working behind the bar, especially at the infamous 'Sydney Junction Hotel', on a Friday or Saturday night, that take no notice of how intoxicated a person is, they provide their friends with unlimited drinks at double the shots. I mean is this fair to blame the actions on a single person's behavior, when it technically stems down to the irresponsible service of alcohol from bar staff? This is only one point in my argument that I think should be looked at, which could in the long run help create a solution to the problem. Yes, limit the amount of drinks you can give to a single customer at one time, but don't ruin it for the people who are doing the right thing and just going out to have a good night and experience what Newcastle has to offer.

Newcastle is not the only place in which I have experienced these forms of venues, yet it is one of the very few places in the world where a whole generation is being punished and stereotyped for the actions of very few. I don't think it is right that the younger generation is being blamed for a cultural issue of violence being brought from all generations, with a view of blame on alcohol. Where are the statistics that prove that the reasoning for the decrease in violence is related to the "Newcastle solution"? When the reality of the decrease of violence could (and in my opinion, does) derive from the decrease of activity in the city of Newcastle, due to these lockout laws and restrictions. This is reiterated in the 2014 article by the Newcastle Herald titled "Culture of violence, not booze, to blame" written by **JANEK SPEIGHTT**, which states "now, five years after lockouts and early closings were introduced, we constantly hear police and government spruik the "Newcastle solution", dishing out statistics about how violence has plummeted. Yet statistics are just statistics if context isn't provided. Where are the studies into patronage? Where are the papers comparing the decrease in assaults with the decrease in activity? If the aim is to reduce assaults by reducing the number of people heading out, then it seems" ..." the lockout strategy has been a raging success."

In correlation with these lockout laws, businesses are going under. We are one of the very few cities in which you cannot get food or even go out for dinner past 9:30 at night, so why in which would we try and encourage tourists (and the revenue that they would bring) from growing cities across all of Australia, and the world to come to our wonderful city, when they can't get food, have a couple of drinks and go out for a dance without having a deadline? I am not the only one who believes that this is the case. I often discuss these issues with my colleagues, friends and community members, which in turn strongly agree that if these laws were lifted, it would not only create more of an opportunity for Newcastle to expand and accommodate to what the public and tourists want, it will put in a more permanent solution to instead of the "band aid" one that has been established since 2008, which has not proven to be as effective as they once thought.

As a young resident of Newcastle, who has witnessed and experienced time and time again the effect and damage these laws and restrictions are having on our city, I advise you to strongly contemplate the few solutions I have put forward and to consider what would be a more permanent resolution to this ongoing problem. Let's work towards building a better city for not only the residents, but all the future tourists it would attract by making us in coalition with every other major city across Australia.

Kind regards

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