

Dear Minister Grant

I'm contacting you in relation to the upcoming review of the Sydney lockout laws, and to urge you to either discontinue these laws, or amend them so that the lockout starts at 3:00 AM with alcohol being able to be served until 5:00 AM, as well as making the laws fairer by applying them across the whole state, including the casino.

I live in the Western Suburbs, in Granville, but regularly go out to pubs and clubs in Oxford Street in Darlinghurst. I have seen first-hand the effect of the lockouts on Sydney nightlife in the affected areas, with a number of pubs and clubs having closed down, and significantly fewer people going to the ones that are still open. It's not only pubs and clubs that have been impacted; other long-running businesses in the affected areas have also had to close down, such as late night takeaway shops and a 24 hour newsagency in Oxford Street that had been operating in the street for decades (the owners of the latter specifically attributed the closure to the lockout laws). Taxi drivers have also been affected due to the reduction in the number of people who are going out, and bar staff have had their hours cut, making it difficult for many of them to make a living from doing this type of work. I believe that a city's nightlife is an integral part of its culture, and it is sad to see that Sydney's nightlife has lost its spark, atmosphere and vibrancy as a direct result of the lockout laws.

While I don't think it is intentional, I also consider that lockout laws that only target CBD areas, such as the ones in Sydney, unfairly affect the LGBTI community, as all our pubs and clubs are normally located in these areas, like Oxford Street in Sydney, and Spring Hill and Fortitude Valley in Brisbane. At the present time, all the gay bars in Sydney have to close by 3:00 AM. However, if I was heterosexual, I could go to pubs and nightclubs in Parramatta until 6:00 AM, close to where I live, but as a gay man, I would not feel safe going to such places. On the way home from Oxford Street, I do occasionally pop in briefly to the local Granville pub, which is allowed to stay open until 4:00 AM with no lockout, though I would never make it obvious while I'm there that I was gay, for fear of abuse or even violence. I also fear that more LGBTI pubs in Sydney will close, due to the significant decrease in the number of patrons.

Public transport is also a significant issue for people in my situation, who live in the suburbs but go out in the city, as the trains don't start running until around 4:45 AM. As it would be too expensive for me to get a taxi home (this would cost at least \$70), I have to resort to catching a NightRide bus home, which takes approximately 25 minutes longer than a train (50 minutes for a NightRide bus compared to 25 minutes for a train) and only runs hourly on week days. If the pubs and clubs were able to stay open until 5:00 AM, it would be much easier for me to get home if I wanted to stay out late, as I would then be able to catch a train.

I regularly travel to Brisbane and Melbourne, and have been struck the last few times I've gone out to pubs and clubs in these cities how much better their nightlife is in comparison to Sydney at the present time, which I consider to be largely due to the lockout laws in Sydney. While Brisbane has had lockout laws for many years, the lockout starts two hours later than the one in Sydney, with no new patrons being allowed to enter after 3:00 AM and the cessation of alcohol service at 5:00 AM. I consider these times to be reasonable, as they allow people to stay out all night if they wish, and to catch a train home. If the Sydney lockout laws were amended so that the times were the same as those currently in place in Queensland, I for one would be satisfied with this, and wouldn't feel the need to write any further emails like this one! From research I have done on the Internet, I'm of the understanding that most large international cities overseas, such as New York City and London, do not have lockout laws.

However, if your government decides not to change the current lockout laws, while I think this would be a mistake for our state's nightlife culture and tourism, I would at least ask you to consider making the laws fairer by applying them across the whole state, including the casino. There is no reason whatsoever that the laws should only apply to CBD areas, as alcohol-related violence can occur at any time and in any place, and there is certainly no reason the casino should be exempted, where problem gamblers could lose thousands of dollars in one night. There is considerable resentment in Sydney in some quarters that the Star City Casino is exempted, and I refer again to my comments above regarding LGBTI pubs and clubs being particularly affected.

I would like to add that I was very saddened and angered by the deaths of Thomas Kelly and Daniel Christie in Kings Cross. However, I don't believe that the great majority of people who are partying and enjoying themselves, and are in no way abusive or violent, should be collectively punished due to the actions of a very small group of individuals. I believe in coming down hard on violent individuals, and in taking personal responsibility (something I understand the Coalition espouses), and that individuals who commit violent acts should have lengthy jail sentences imposed, as has been legislated by your government in NSW in regards to one-punch attacks, which I congratulate you on. Another very significant fact regarding the assaults on Thomas Kelly and Daniel Christie is that they occurred between 9:00 PM and 10:00 PM. Therefore, the current lockout laws in Sydney would have in no way prevented these attacks.

I will also mention that I'm 47 years' old, not 18 or 19, and going out to pubs and nightclubs once a fortnight or so is one of the main things that I've always enjoyed doing as a recreational activity, to relax, have fun and socialise, and I make no apologies for that.

Thankyou for reading my email.

Russell Brooks

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