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I oppose the Sydney lockouts laws

DC Daniel Crocetti 



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To: Liquor Law Review; 

Sun 3/04

Inbox

To Whom it May Concern.

I was a promotor and DJ for well over a decade in Sydney and now work in advertising, and our events toured some of the biggest names in the dance scene to Sydney and around Australia as well as nurturing local Australian talent. I invested countless hours of time and effort into the culture of our city, promoting and advancing it's reputation and it's night time economy. I wanted to write to you to express my anger and disappointment in this cities lockout laws. The way they got implemented without proper consultation. The damaging effect they have had on peoples livelihoods, our venues for live music, and also our reputation globally.

Sydney has always played second fiddle to places like Melbourne, but over the years we had started building a unique night time scene and vibe. Through the years i was very lucky to DJ and promote at some of the best clubs in the city, places like Soho, Yu, Sugareef, Candy's Apartment/Underground Cafe, The Cauldron, Suzi Q's/Tantra, Home Nightclub, Civic Theatre, The Bourbon and many others. Over the years I met friends that I'll have forever, I was (and still am now and again) part of a culture that was there to enjoy amazing music and have a good night on the dance floor. Most times those nights don't start until midnight, and don't finish until well into the morning. In my 10+ years I spent countless hours moving from club to club either working or socialising, and it was rare that i saw any major violence in these clubs. I felt it was always a very controlled environment that people where safe to have a good time while being controlled by RSA and security in all venues.

The issue is that most people who are not part of this culture, don't understand that being out later than 3am doesn't mean your binge drinking and fighting (as the media would portray it).

Since the lockout came into play, these venues are the ones who suffered the most. In the past, as i mentioned people would be free to go out anytime, and could decide to move between venues if they felt they wanted to. Now, this is not possible. If you choose to go to a club now by 11pm, you are essentially locked into that venue. if you choose to take the risk to go to another venue, there is a very good chance you wont get into that next venue because a line is forming to beat the 1.30am lockout. Now once you are in a venue past 1.30am thats fine, but what if you want to go outside to get some fresh air for 15 minutes, (or smoke for some) or you just want to grab a late night snack then go back to the venue?... **you can't. you are locked out.** That's the end of the night. So your friends could still be inside and your left outside. From talking to security guards they have told me that this is causing more anger than there ever was before the lockouts.

This is a problem not only for patrons, but for all the people employed by that venue, and those issues get worse with the last drinks. Just because your out past 3am doesn't mean your binge drinking (and we have RSA to stop that from happening). So if you consider a club that has a capacity of say 300 people. At 1.30am, they can no longer let more patrons in. so you

lose a good 20-40% capacity by 2pm. Then at 3pm you can "stay open" but can't serve alcohol. This causes more to leave. The venue now has a diminished capacity to make money, why bother to stay open? they have to pay staff, promoters, artists and security but their ability to make money is massively diminished. The patrons are forced to stay locked in the venue or leave... plus they can't have a drink. (Even if you're not drunk and want to stay to listen to the artist that is performing) As a sensible adult I should be able to make these decisions myself without being forced by Govt.

It's a pretty obvious downward spiral.

- Less people on the street
- Crowds in venues are down
- Club makes less money
- Artists don't want to come back due to less people, promoters can't afford to bring artists to Sydney and can't sell enough tickets.
- Club patronage goes down again
- Club makes less money again
- Less work for local talent as well (along with less bar staff, less cleaners, less security)
- Eventually club closes the doors...permanently

Since the laws were introduced, 42 bars, clubs and small businesses have closed their doors in Kings Cross.

The night time soul of the city is quickly being destroyed. Live music, night culture, arts, entertainment, restaurants, small business and hospitality are being ruined. The experiences, venues, DJ's and musicians are being lost and will not come back (along with thousands of jobs and livelihoods). One after the other iconic venues shutting the doors, restaurants and surrounding stores closing as the whole community around those clubs and bars flatlines. And musicians and DJs look for other places to live and perform. Many entertainment areas are resembling an old west scene with tumble weeds, compared to the [bustling nighttime economy](#) that once was. The [open letter from artists flight facilities](#) highlights what has been lost.

In the meantime police and sniffer dogs are descending on public pools, wine bars are being targeted by licensing, in a city already heavily regulated over the last decade, becoming more and more a nanny state. We're left with a sad soul less city, building a reputation as a place not to go. (on the other hand Melbourne is embracing the 24hr city) Meanwhile the casinos, are left to trade all night, and we are essentially funnelling all late night revellers into a gambling den? how is this responsible? the Casino is the [most violent venue in the city](#). While there are many venues who never had issues that are being shut down by these arbitrary laws that are "supposed" to curb violence. It's also baffling that in fact Sydney was voted one of the safest city in the world before the lockouts came into play, and Barry oFarrell was promoting the decline in alcohol related violence publicly before these 2 tragic incidents.

Unfortunately 2 sad deaths have been used as a tool to implement these blanket laws that, if they were in place at the time would not have prevented the incidents as both happened prior to 11pm on the streets (not in a club). So how is putting more restrictions on venues helping? In my opinion these laws have just increased the issues, with young kids "pre-loading" on drinks before going out. Violence on the streets because everyone is spilling onto the street at the same time, with no way to get home.

There is also so many stats that contradict claims that these laws are working and rather just forcing foot traffic down, and violence to other areas.

- [Foot traffic has fallen in Kings Cross by up to 80 per cent, according to the City of Sydney.](#)
- [Profits at bars in the area had plummeted 40 per cent](#)
- [Live Music Ticket sales are down](#)
- [More than 42 venues, bars and businesses closed](#)

plus heaps more that was brought to light in the [Matt Barrie Expose](#).

As a global city we should be nurturing Sydney as a 24hr destination, OPEN all night, not shutting it down. We should be looking at implementing measures to ensure that we can have a 24 hour nightlife as well as a safe city, they are not mutually exclusive. Everyone including late night revellers want a safe environment.

I stand with the [vast majority](#) as shown in this [survey](#) who are opposed to these laws, and would like to see them removed/ammended based on consultation with the whole community that it effects implementing solutions that address issues BUT also enhances our late night culture giving special attention to live music venues, rather than Gambling Dens:

- **Tougher sentencing for offenders (we are still seeing people get off with a slap on the wrist, yet venues are punished heavily?)**
- **Inadequate late night transport situation in Sydney - Taxi Changeovers and lack of all night services.**
- **Improved CCTV senarios for entertainment precincts along with co-operation between police and venues.**
- **Density and diversity of licensed premises - with late night trading (not just small bars)**
- **Venue management**
- **Education to address the tendency towards violence among certain groups of individuals.**
- **Research and Education into things like steroids and drugs that are contributing to violent behaviour.**
- **Night time mayor in charge of protecting the night economy.**
- **Reversing the freeze on Late night licenses for Live music and Dance venues.**

(please note all links above are clickable to see references and information)

Thank you
Daniel Crocetti