

liquor law review Submission

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Wed 30/03/2016 9:12 PM

To: Liquor Law Review <liquorlawreview@justice.nsw.gov.au>;

Submission regarding 1.30 am Lock-out Laws and 3am Last Drinks

While this submission voices my objections to the lockout and last drinks laws in general I wish to point out the disproportionate detrimental effect it has on the Gay Lesbian Bisexual and Transgender (GLBT) community.

Nightlife has long held a unique position in GLBT community as a place that for many offers a sanctuary from oppression and mainstream society where many of us do not feel safe, comfortable or welcome. The relationship between nightlife and GLBT community has played a role built over many decades of community building and has a historic role in Gay Liberation. It is often said Gay Liberation started at early morning hours of June 28, 1969, at the Stonewall Inn a famous gay bar in NY. Locally the world famous Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras was born On 24 June 1978 at 10 pm a night-time celebration followed a morning protest march and commemoration of the Stonewall Riots organised by the Gay Solidarity Group more than 500 people gathered on the Oxford Street nightclub strip, calling for an end to discrimination against homosexuals. Darlinghurst and Oxford street's nightlife hold a special place in GLBT history, liberation and society, it is also slap bang in the middle of the lockout zone.

In Sydney the GLBT community has formed a social ghetto over many decades in the suburbs of Darlinghurst and Kings Cross that are now directly affected by the lockout laws. These suburbs are not just a place to go for a drink; many GLBT people have built entire lives within the lockout zone. Many businesses and community facilities catering to GLBT people are based within, or close to, the lockout zone. The co-location in Darlinghurst (and close by) of these businesses and facilities is an important part of their success, a critical mass of GLBT activity, creating a vibrant unique world famous GLBT enclave.

Darlinghurst and Kings Cross services the GLBT community of greater Sydney. This a unique role which cannot be replaced by just going to a local nightclub in say western Sydney which may be available to much of the general community.

All nightlife is has an economic base in alcohol sales. Remove those sales and the whole economic base collapses. Along with the nightlife a large part of the GLBT community structure collapses too.

Destroying this nightlife puts much of the GLBT community support structure in

jeopardy. This will not be easily replaced - it has been built over decades with enormous investment both commercial and social.

As an easy example of how important the GLBT ghetto is to my community one only need to recall the role the GLBT enclave of Darlinghurst played (and continues to play) in Australia's response to HIV/AIDS that is considered the gold standard. Without the nightlife there is no enclave. The nightlife is the economic starting point building critical mass and the rest of the community facilities, commercial and social, follow.

The role of nightlife in GLBT community is also unique with many (particularly gay men but many women too) having a lifelong association with nightlife. I am 56 and have been attending nightclubs since I was 16, that is 40 years and I have no intention of stopping soon. It is an important part of my life, it is the safest place in my world, it is where I feel most connected with my community, the least isolated, my most creative, my happiness mental health and wellbeing is strongly related to my regular access to vibrant GLBT nightlife.

The lockout laws have far reaching detrimental effect on the GLBT community. Remove the alcohol sales and eventually the foundation for much of the community collapses along with the nightlife.

Some may say I am arguing for "special rights" for the GLBT community but this is not the case as there is a difference between equality and equity. To quote a popular cartoon on the internet "Equality is about sameness, it promotes fairness and justice by giving everyone the same thing. But it can only work if everyone starts from the same place... Equality is about fairness, it is about making sure people get the same opportunities. Sometimes our differences and/or history, can create barriers to participation so we must first create equity before we can enjoy equality." I am saying the lockout laws are unfair to the GLBT community as I am sure it is to many other subcultures who cannot find their community at The Star Casino or in greater Sydney. While I cannot speak for others I can say these laws are unfair to much of my GLBT community.

As a gay man for me personally the lockout laws are having far-reaching detrimental effects on my happiness, community support and quality of life.

Luke Cutler
