

Formal Submission: Liquor Law Review

Erik Denison

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Dear Hon. Ian Callinan AC.,

My submission is on two areas, the LGBTQ community and transport.

1. Gay and Lesbian Community

I am a leader within the LGBTQ Community and long-time member of Australia's first gay rugby union club, the Sydney Convicts

<http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/convicts-rugby-club-members-campaign-to-end-homophobia-in-sport-scoops-awards-20150625-ghxdr1.html>

<http://gaynewsnetwork.com.au/viewpoint/many-fear-a-plebiscite-will-cause-division-but-what-if-the-opposite-occurs-18993.html>

Oxford Street: The heart of our community

- Violence was never a major issue on Oxford St and our community has never called for change
- Yet our historical gathering space was lumped into the new rules **without consultation despite the devastating impact we feared it would have on our community**
- It now also sounds like officials manipulated statistics and misled the wider community about the need for these laws
- When our community objected to the introduction of the laws we were told it would be reviewed (which it now is and we trust you will take our concerns into account as the key stakeholders in our own community)
- The gay community is already marginalised and the lockouts dis-proportionally and unnecessarily targets our minority community more than any others and undermines our businesses and community groups
- Our meeting places are historically bars and clubs where anonymity is assured. They are often the only places people who are in the closet or just coming out feel safe to be themselves ... there is nowhere else they feel safe. They often travel from regional communities to come to Oxford
- Many of our venues were already doing it tough thanks to online dating but now they are really struggling (eg. the Midnight Shift, Oxford Hotel ... and as you know one of our oldest gay bars, the Exchange Hotel has shut down. The Flinders was also very gay friendly)
- In many cases it's now impossible to get into our nightclubs after midnight because they are full. There is a restriction on new venues.

<http://gaynewsnetwork.com.au/news/new-south-wales/flinders-hotel-shuts-down-16139.html>

Licensed Venues Support Non-Alcohol Social Options

- Also, many of the venues sponsor and support community groups such as The Sydney Convicts Rugby Union Team (which has been running a campaign to end homophobia in sport)

- These venues can no longer afford to support community organisations that provide critical non-alcohol based social options. The Midnight Shift used to be core sponsor. The reduction of sponsorship revenue has meant the Convicts cannot pay for coaches
- **It's an ironic, devastating and completely unreported outcome. The laws introduced to limit alcohol consumption are damaging the groups that supply non-alcohol related social options**
- Our stores are also shutting down due to the lack of evening traffic on Oxford. They used to stay open late. Restaurants are also shutting down leaving a wasteland of boarded up stores on both sides of Oxford (only businesses on one side were suffering before)
- These stores are also major financial supporters of our community groups
- There is no one else to fund our community and replace the money we have lost due. Will the NSW Government be doing this? Who will fund our community?

"Greens candidate for Sydney Chris Brentin said 42 businesses had shut in Kings Cross since the new laws began."

<http://www.starobserver.com.au/news/local-news/new-south-wales-news/oxford-st-icon-says-closure-on-the-cards-due-to-catastrophic-lockouts-laws/134543>

Mardi Gras and Sydney/Australia's Reputation

- Mardi Gras is a massive contributor to Sydney's economy and people come here to experience a vibrant 'world class' city that is open 24 hours like other 'world class' cities
- This is no longer the case
- Gay travelers are well informed and there is now a global belief that Sydney isn't a very fun place to visit any longer fuelled by wide media coverage in the gay press and in mainstream media (BBC, Daily Mail, NY Times)
- This has been compounded by the fact that the state has twice refused to grant a weekend exemption to the lockouts during Mardi Gras... this seems to prove that the lockouts are morally motivated rather than a practical solution to a real problem
- We can think of no rational reason why the state government would deny an exemption to the lock-out laws during a major cultural event like Mardi Gras that has had very very very low rates of violence given the huge size of the event, unless there is a moral imperative
- The LGBTQ community also did not ask for the lock-out laws to be introduced in our community

<http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/lockout-keeping-tourists-from-mardi-gras-venues-say-20150226-13pjo0.html>

<http://gaynewsnetwork.com.au/viewpoint/amsterdam-gay-pride-no-lockout-laws-no-alcohol-bans-no-violence-sydney-on-the-other-hand-2-18559.html>

2. Late Night Transport

- Prior to the lock-outs there were many people on the streets of Oxford and Kings Cross because there was no way to get home
- I have experienced that many times. Buses drive by full, trains are closed, taxis won't pick passengers up and there were no other options
- I have seen many fights break out among people trying to get home, they are drunk and a small altercation escalates

- Instead of solving this issue the state government introduced lock-out laws??
- A key solution seemed blatantly obvious to anyone who was in the city at night and I emailed and called Sydney Buses many times to complain about the fact buses were full during peak night periods and impossible to board
- Again, the fact that a basic solution such as better transport was not tried before the introduction of lock-out laws suggest to me the laws are entirely morally driven and perhaps economically (to boost tax revenue from the Casino) and have little to do with finding and trying practical solutions that protect and enhance the night-time economy