

## Liquor Law review submission

In considering Sydney as a major international city, we must find the balance the needs of a 24 hour economy. Safety and access must be balanced to create a liveable night-time economy. The lockout laws are a lopsided approach that focus entirely on safety, foregoing Sydney's reputation as a global player. Not only this, but there is a lack of evidence to how effective this legislation truly is when considering the effects of crime displacement, and the deeper questions of our culture, including our interaction with violence more generally.

We must assess the issue of alcohol-related violence under the question: what does a healthy, safe and inclusive night time economy look like? This involves diversity, both of people and of places to go. It involves community-led activities, and liaising with police and businesses. It involves education campaigns and better transport. It involves the perception of safety, which comes from an active street, rather than the deserted streets that we are now seeing across Sydney. It involves minority groups, such as the LGBTIQ community, feeling like they have a safe space go.

We have global examples to draw from. Vancouver, for example, has reliable and consistent public transport running all through the night. Amsterdam has a Night Mayor. London is taking a cooperative approach with a targeted policing project that works closely with local pubs and night-time businesses. Most global cities experience alcohol-related violence at night ([http://www.who.int/violence\\_injury\\_prevention/violence/world\\_report/factsheets/pb\\_violencealcohol.pdf](http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/world_report/factsheets/pb_violencealcohol.pdf)); but few respond by shutting their city down entirely. Again this brings us back to the question of what a healthy, safe and inclusive night-time economy looks like.

Whilst at first glance, the lock-out laws appear to be successful, they are a highly punitive measure that denies the underlying issues facing our culture: that is, the issue of what is predominantly, male violence. The lockout laws place a cover over growing roots; they stifle what is seen at first, but ultimately our harmful culture still festers beneath. This will likely manifest in other areas, including the domestic sphere. I will be addressing this point further in the submission.

There are several issues that I would like to explore regarding the Government's Liquor Laws and its approach to alcohol-fuelled violence.

The first issue is that of transparency. Specifically, the community at large has demonstrated its concerns surrounding the Star Casino and its exemption from the otherwise blanket lockout laws. This is exemplified through the online "#casinomike" hashtag that has taken hold of social media (<http://www.sbs.com.au/news/thefeed/article/2016/02/10/mike-bairds-run-social-media-darling-goes-bust-casinomike>) demonstrating a strong community resistance to perceived corruption. Whilst the casino falls within the locality of the lockout law zone, it is perplexing and unclear as to why the casino is exempt, when alcohol-fuelled violence seems no less prevalent. It speaks of transparency, and the appearance of state government privileging the gambling industry and those capable of funding the state campaign, over smaller businesses. This is a highly problematic public appearance for state government to have, as it gives the public little faith in the government's intentions. What may be a well-intended legislation, that is the lockout laws, is heavily tarnished by the government's inexplicable exemptions of the casino.

In effect, this also favours gambling as a solution to drinking. It seems a government-stamped approval to gamble, as people who may not otherwise go to the casino have no other options. This is not the healthy, safe and inclusive night that the community of Sydney needs.

The popularity of small bars in recent years indicates what the Sydney culture has been lacking, and what is now under threat. The City of Sydney area in particular must accommodate for a diverse crowd to stand up as an international city. The dominance of the casino, however, removes the

opportunities for small businesses and diversity to thrive. This is doing the culture of Sydney no favours, and is certainly not assisting to change the alcohol-fuelled violence that permeates our culture. As the City of Sydney submission discusses, the head of the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research has given damning evidence about the Star, stating "...most of the assaults, but not by any means all, in Pyrmont are concentrated in the area near the casino" (<http://www.news.com.au/lifestyle/food/drink/rise-in-assaults-around-sydneys-star-casino-increases-calls-for-venue-to-be-part-of-lockout-zone/news-story/68ecb6555c4450c09b6323ca5bde1127>).

Easy access to gaming machines has widely reported negative consequences for a city, including impaired family relationships, financial issues and wider societal issues including homelessness and the links between gambling and family violence (<http://www.news.com.au/lifestyle/food/drink/rise-in-assaults-around-sydneys-star-casino-increases-calls-for-venue-to-be-part-of-lockout-zone/news-story/68ecb6555c4450c09b6323ca5bde1127>).

Further, statistics of alcohol-fuelled violence around the casino are not favourable. Since the lockout laws have been in place, we have seen assaults more than double; 20 assaults were recorded between April 2013 and March 2014. Then, between April 2014 and March 2015, there were 74 assaults recorded (<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/datablog/2015/jun/22/spike-in-assaults-recorded-at-sydney-casino-following-citys-lockout-laws>). The Star speaks of relative percentage of violence considering the high volume of people who attend. However, considering the lockout laws were pushed into place following the tragic deaths of two young males, it seems assault and deaths are not a numbers game at all, nor should they be. The fact that the Star experiences assaults, as Kings Cross often did, speaks of the possibility of a death occurring also. These numbers demonstrate no favourable argument for keeping the Star open whilst the surroundings are forced to close their doors.

If we are to argue that the number of assaults around the casino is the result of displacement from other areas such as Kings Cross, this demonstrates the lack of thought and evidence for the lockout laws more broadly. That is, by preventing people from going places, there are no people to cause crime. This is not a thorough policy, and it will kill the culture of our city along with the night economy that is valued at \$17.8 billion (<http://www.smh.com.au/comment/its-time-we-grew-up-and-ditched-the-one-size-fits-all-lockout-20160403-gnx1ml.html>). The government may find revenue in the extra gambling that is surely occurring with the extra patronage, but of course, this will see the social inequality rise exponentially in our city. This is not the safe and inclusive city that Sydney wants. I urge the state government to reconsider its priorities, and if it must apply a blanket response, to not leave air pockets for the few at the very top to stay alive, whilst everybody else is smothered below.

The second issue that I will explore is that of crime dislocation, and the effects this is having on the wider city.

If we look at the deaths from domestic violence, we begin to see the effects of what is predominantly, male violence. Currently in Australia, every 3 hours a woman is hospitalised due to domestic violence; in 2015, 79 women died from domestic violence (<https://realforwomen.wordpress.com/murdered-women-2015/counting-dead-women-australia-dtj/>). Partner violence is estimated to involve alcohol up to half the time, clearly showing how prominent a role alcohol plays with violence in the home life (<https://theconversation.com/alcohols-link-to-domestic-violence-is-in-focus-now-what-37696>). This Report also states that married women whose husbands got drunk a couple of times a month were "three times more likely to experience physical violence".

Lockout laws, and the 10pm cut-off for alcohol purchasing, does little to mitigate the effects of domestic violence. It seems an unequal effort, on the government's behalf, to take so drastic a

response to the death of two males, when the weekly count for women's deaths is still on the rise (<https://realforwomen.wordpress.com/murdered-women-2015/counting-dead-women-australia-dtj/>). It is probable that the lockout laws are pushing people out of public locations and into the domestic sphere to drink. This surely is putting the lives of more women at risk through increasing the chances of alcohol-fuelled domestic violence. The government has barely mentioned this as a possibility, and seems to treat this as a separate issue entirely. I urge the government to find the correlation and research into how many more people, and males in particular, are drinking more at home as a result of the lockout laws. This must not be negated from the evidence as it stands as a real threat to the lives of many women.

Further, the anecdotal evidence of the effects of the lockout laws are widely reported. Newtown, for example, which is one of Sydney's most safe and inclusive locations for the lesbian community and the wider LGBTIQ community, has observed the adverse impacts of the change in crowd (<http://www.newtownprecinct.com.au/protecting-the-newtown-vibe/>). The Newtown Neighbourhood Centre has liaised with the community regarding the perceptions of reduced safety due to the influx of crowds that are usually drawn to the city, where the lockout laws are in place. Government should note the community-observed changes and provide funding, at the very least, to such initiatives as Friday Night Vibes; a community-led response to keep Newtown an inclusive space.

I encourage the state government to look beyond the evidence of assault rates in the lockout zones, and see the wider effects on other communities and the domestic sphere, to ensure that crime is not being dislocated to other areas.

Finally, I will explore the wider issue of culture and how our city needs to embrace a new form of night-life as a viable, long-term solution, separated from the focus of alcohol. As I discussed throughout my first point, Sydney must offer a diversified atmosphere of night time places and activities. Alcohol is currently a major driving point to go out at night. In assessing one of the effective night time economies, Amsterdam, there are a variety of activities to engage with at night including the Canal Cruise, walking and cycling, and a variety of concerts (<http://www.eatingamsterdamtours.com/blog/amsterdam-at-night/>). Sydney must encourage this holistic approach, and ensure that there are viable options for those who go out at night. Various options must be available outside of drinking. This will foster a positive culture and a healthier relationship to drinking, diluting the focus on drinking with variety and options.

The live music industry has been severely affected by the lockout laws, yet it is a positive challenge to the otherwise permeating drinking culture (<http://www.abc.net.au/cm/lb/7097626/data/live-music-report-data.pdf>). Live music adds to the "vibrant, social dynamic", as the report states, of a culture. The live music and small bar scene gives an alternative to the traditional pub scene to which Sydney has long been accustomed. This must be encouraged as part of Sydney's plan to diversify the night scene. Live music is a particularly powerful attraction for the night time economy, and whilst recognising that musicians form part of the city's lowest paid workers ([http://www.musicinaustralia.org.au/index.php?title=Musicians\\_in\\_the\\_Census](http://www.musicinaustralia.org.au/index.php?title=Musicians_in_the_Census)), we must be careful to nurture this scene, and the lockout laws must be cognisant of this. This is one of the reasons why a blanket approach is so problematic. The lockout laws have had flow on effects not just for the music industry and small businesses that are not adding to alcohol-fuelled violence levels, but also for the wider hospitality scene, including restaurants (<http://www.news.com.au/finance/business/other-industries/would-the-last-person-in-sydney-please-turn-the-lights-out/news-story/3ac474b2b168b029c5080f29d2e5510a>). Whilst alcohol may be a part of some of these activities, they add to a diverse crowd and make the city safer through

this dilution. We are thus punishing a large section of the night-time economy that is adding to the vibrancy and positive culture of our city.

Whilst recognising the issue with alcohol-fuelled violence, I would like to propose some alternatives for state government to consider, to ensure a sustainable, measured and reasonable response that will benefit the community.

#### A) Increase public transport.

Cities such as Vancouver do not stop public transport services because it is night time. This enables ease around night time activities, but most importantly, creates a safe community where everybody can get home affordably and without hassle. Such a measure will also likely encourage people to get home earlier, as crowds will not be forced to wait for the taxi change-over times at 3 am. This will also assist in dispersing people at regular intervals, and create a more open and affordable city.

#### B) Establish a Night Mayor to coordinate efforts

As exemplified in Amsterdam, the night time economy is an integral Part of the city's identity and culture. Establishing a Night Mayor or similar role will give Sydney the focused coordination needed between different stakeholders and key players, including the police, business owners, councils and the community. This will enable the collaborative response that Sydney is currently lacking, to foster an open, safe and inclusive city.

#### C) Diversifying

As mentioned throughout this submission, Sydney must have a diverse range of places that cater to different needs. This includes spaces that cater to minority groups including the LGBTIQ community, and to non-drinking communities. There must be far more activated spaces for live music, including but not limited to jazz shows which have a strong, positive culture in New York

(<https://books.google.com.au/books?id=nGC0AwAAQBAJ&pg=PA262&lpg=PA262&dq=positive+culture+of+jazz+in+new+york&source=bl&ots=ZSulwtj9IZ&sig=XSMYRv57S2jQldrwnSRCX1NuUUk&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwj5tJL2kfTLAhVhW6YKHZfuBPQ6AEIXTAG#v=onepage&q=positive%20culture%20of%20jazz%20in%20new%20york&f=false>).

#### D) Options for good behaviour

The lock out laws are faulty in that they do not collaborate with institutions that have a good relationship with the community and foster that in return. Small bars are increasingly popular, and create an alternative space to the heavy drinking and loud pub or nightclub atmosphere. Such places should be able to apply for longer hours on the basis of good behaviour.

## E) Education campaigns

In assessing alcohol related violence as a cultural issue, we must begin to look at methods to change our culture's response to masculinity and violence. We must not only open Sydney up to more night-time options, but we also need strong education campaigns to help explain the links between masculinity and violence as explored through gender studies. We need to focus on community-led responses rather than punitive approaches to engage people with what they want from our city. The City of Sydney Council has done research with the community on this and I implore you to look at those results.

I urge you to consider this submission as an alternative response to the current liquor laws, in assessing a wider, more sustainable and viable approach to changing the alcohol-fuelled violence from which this city suffers.