

# Attn: Liquor Law Review

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Attn: Liquor Law Review

I am writing to the Review to say that I am a local resident (Woolloomooloo) that opposes the lockout laws in their current form.

## **The lockout laws have not made me feel safer**

The reduction in foot traffic in the area has made me feel less safe as a young woman walking the streets. I always had a sense of 'safety in numbers' and felt less intimidated walking home at night time. I have also still seen plenty of violence on the streets.

Incidentally, in my 8 years of going out to bars and venues, I have seen violence happen *inside* a venue only once. Dozens of other incidents I have witnessed have all occurred on the streets. It would seem that locking people *out* of venues makes it harder to manage them. It seems to make more sense to put the onus on venues to provide licenced security, RSA and CCTV and other deterrent measures to minimise potential instances of violence. No one can easily control what goes on outside on the streets where there is less oversight and people may feel like their behaviour is less scrutinised – the likelihood of police on patrol on a given street is low. Security and CCTV inside venues is a given.

## **I have seen businesses close**

A significant number of businesses have closed in the 'zone' in the last two years. It affects people's livelihoods. It has also made the atmosphere in various districts less appealing – no one likes to see boarded up shops with yellowing envelopes shoved under the doors. We want vibrant and inclusive urban communities.

## **They have restricted my choice**

As a young person who likes to spend my leisure time socialising with friends, seeing live music

and dancing in the evenings, I have found that my choices have been significantly limited thanks to the introduction of the lockout laws. It feels as if some businesses have given up offering late night entertainment as the compliance burden is simply too much. Further, I often work into the evenings so start my leisure time later than most. It can be very frustrating to be not able to get into local venues after 1:30am. I am a responsible drinker. I feel like it's unfair and restrictive to be living on a past notion of the appropriate time to do certain things when the reality is we live in a 24-hour economy. Not everyone works a 9-5, Monday to Friday job. Not everyone wants to eat dinner at 8pm. Not everyone wants to go to bed at midnight. In business and other areas of life, flexibility is highly valued. Why can our notion of entertainment and night time activity be flexible too?

### **It is damaging the arts**

There are now less opportunities for music to be consumed, making it less of a viable livelihood for musicians. Venues are also less able to provide up and coming artists opportunities to perform and practice their art and build their talent.

### **It is damaging citizen relationships with the police**

Since the lockout laws have been introduced, dozens and dozens of friends have spoken to me about negative interactions they have had with police and I can also speak from personal experience that a deterioration in community relations has occurred since the lockouts. Numerous times I have been inside venues where the police have entered and severely changed the atmosphere as they stomped around menacingly looking for evidence of RSA non-compliance by staff or rowdy behaviour by patrons. It is unpleasant and damages the trust of the community in the police force about for whose interests they are primarily acting. Friendly cops striving for positive engagement with citizens seems like a thing of the past. I have witness cops bear the brunt of people's anger with the laws, and in turn, their impatience and harsh responses to minor incidents.

### **It is a lost opportunity for tourism and the economy**

I point you to Melbourne's White Night - <http://whitenightmelbourne.com.au/> - as an excellent example of what embracing a vibrant nightlife can do for tourism, the arts and the economy. The most recent event attracted nearly 600,000 people. The festival generated \$16.8 million for the Victorian economy in 2015 (<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-08-10/white-night-nuit-blanche-to-return-to-melbourne-in-2016/6685434> ) and hotels were largely at capacity. It was also an opportunity to showcase the works of thousands of artists and musicians. Importantly, there were no major incidents despite the crowds and access to alcohol.

With a different attitude to the night time economy, Sydney could attract more tourists with night-oriented cultural events as well as boost the economy more generally by limiting restrictions on business operations. It will be good for youth employment figures, especially as

hospitality industry is traditionally a significant employer of this demographic.

**I believe there are alternative solutions that will more effectively address violence whilst still allowing a vibrant nightlife to flourish**

Placing restrictions on people's movements and access to venues and alcohol does not address two major underlying problems that I believe the government is trying to address – binge drinking and violence. These two issues are CULTURAL issues. Attempts to block people from venues or forcing them to return home early only drives drinking underground and does not address underlying causes that may increase a person's likelihood of becoming violent. These issues are complex and require more than a Band-Aid fix – which the current laws are. Yes they may provide seemingly good immediate outcomes when statistics are not accurately interrogated. But those statistics can end up being put on a pedestal and let society become complacent in actually tackling binge drinking and violence. Two separate, but often linked, issues. *Education* should be the foundation of addressing these issues. Blanket prohibition to all is an ineffective response to the poor behaviour of a few.

I hope the review is considering alternative solutions to a blanket lockout in a set zone. Perhaps individual venues that are repeat offenders of poor RSA could face reduce trading hours or other restrictions. Stricter punishments of repeat problem drunks would also be a fairer alternative to restricting the freedoms of the masses. Individuals who engage in violent activity should face bans from entering venues in the entire CBD precinct.

I also hope the review is considering the impact of transport networks in efficiently moving people around the city and reducing potential for violence on the streets as they try to get home at the end of the night and are frustrated and literally fighting for cabs.

Thank you for your consideration.

Kind regards

Maddy Dwyer

Woolloomooloo