



east sydney neighbourhood association inc.

Liquor law reform – submission 2 April 2016

Background

In response to the *Independent review of the impact of liquor law reforms*, a survey was circulated to residents (Appendix A) and the findings are reported below.

East Sydney is a residential village bound by College, William, Oxford and Forbes streets, one of the highest density residential communities in Australia and home to thousands of people. The East Sydney Neighbourhood Association (ESNA) represents residents and has existed for over 30 years with the aim of improving local residential amenity.

East Sydney is an area extremely sensitive to licensing regulations and has a long history of suffering extremely negative consequences from very poorly managed premises mainly, but not exclusively, on Oxford Street. In addition, East Sydney is the neighbourhood through which patrons tracked the entire night between Oxford Street, Darlinghurst and Kings Cross. Nonetheless, the majority of residents embrace, enjoy and remain accepting and tolerant of many of the impacts of living in a vibrant precinct and seek a balance which respects residential amenity and in particular an environment in which it is possible to sleep undisturbed at night.

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Key messages

- 100% of residents (with the exception of two people) believe somewhat or very much so that there has been an improvement in the safety and general amenity in our neighbourhood since the reform
- 100% of residents (with the exception of two people) believe somewhat or very much so that there has been a reduction in alcohol-related violence and anti-social behaviour since the reform
- Residents are dismayed at the Australian drinking culture
- Residents are infuriated at the lack of respect and consideration from many venue operators and patrons shown to the people who live in our neighbourhood
- Residents are divided 50:50 on whether they would like to see changes to the reforms
 - some would like to see additional measures
 - some would like to see more flexible measures
 - a number would like to see a review of the 10pm bottle shop hours
- Whilst outside the scope of this enquiry, illegal street prostitution remains a serious problem in East Sydney and it would be appropriate to see more police attention on enforcing the law
- Residents resent the suggestion that their human rights to have residential amenity are somehow less important than the 'rights' of patrons to drink 24 hours a day particularly as the majority of these people do not live in the neighbourhood and suffer the consequences of their actions
- Whilst some residents see Kings Cross as the 'natural home' of 24 hour licences, others do not believe it is equitable that Kings Cross residents suffer the consequences

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Response summary

1 Since the reform I believe there has been an improvement in the safety and general amenity in our neighbourhood

Not at all	Not really	Neutral	Somewhat	Very much so
1 resident	1 resident		15%	85%

Sample comments:

- Big improvement. The number of disturbances from drunken louts at 3am have reduced substantially.
- East Sydney has in the past suffered from out of control venues on Oxford Street and these reforms have put in place a reasonable framework which takes our neighbourhood amenity back to the days when I first moved here. Oxford Street used to be a vibrant and majority gay night venue. This meant that many people were locals but bit by bit more and more non-locals started coming who had nil respect for the area and residents.
- East Sydney residents have long campaigned for measures to protect the amenity of the thousands of residents who live here – sleep deprivation is classified by the UN as torture!!!
- For some reason intoxicated people seem to shout much more loudly which i think is also due to them having come out of noisy venues where they have to shout to be heard and when they come out onto the streets they fail to adjust their speaking volume to normal levels.
- From the first day of the new lock out law our street and surrounding lanes became quieter and felt safer. The drug dealers who operated in the lane were gone as the lane was the place where the patrons hid their bottles of alcohol; it was where they did what is termed "pre load". They were not buying their drinks at the nightclubs, as it was expensive.
- It has made a great improvement to the area. It's good not to be woken now in the early hours with people screaming in the streets.
- It's now not 'scary' to come home late at night, or have to leave the house for late-night milk run etc. Can now generally walk streets in a leisurely way, rather than scurrying to and from home at night. Police now pretty much never called to attend to drunks engaging in anti-social behaviour in my street when formerly was calling them multiple times per week.
- Much safer since reforms
- Reduced crowds of drinkers in street garden in front of our home in residential zone, most noticeably of disturbed underage binge drinkers.
- Since introducing the shorter hours there has been far less anti-social behaviour and violence.
- Since the reform there is a drop in the street noise with intoxicated people moving on.
- The 1000s of people who would flock to Kings Cross and Darlinghurst and Oxford st are largely gone – the numbers would not be an issue if the behaviour was good but the extreme drunkenness of enough of these people meant noise, vomit, bad behaviour, harassment etc
- The change was immediate, dramatic and long lasting.
- The improvement has mainly occurred on the weekends on Friday and Saturday night when there is now much less noise from intoxicated persons walking around the streets, which used to occur all night previously.
- The level of late night noise from drunken revellers on Friday and Saturday night seems to have reduced. I am very pleased about this! Noise from loud cars and motorcycles remains a huge problem, and I would welcome increased restrictions and policing on loud motor

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vehicles.

- The level of street noise and disruption has decreased markedly since the intro of the current laws.
- There has been an increase in discarded needles and associated biohazards in the streets, footpaths and parks in the East Sydney zone.
- There has been an increase in street prostitution (and the clients they attract) in the area since the lock-out laws. This is a result of the street prostitutes coming into the area to meet the demand that was catered for within kings-cross and surrounds.
- There is a great deal less street noise – people shouting outside residences, cars revving and horns tooting.

2 Since the reform I believe there has been a reduction in alcohol-related violence and anti-social behaviour:

Not at all	Not really	Neutral	Somewhat	Very much so
1 person	1 resident		50%	50%

Sample comments:

- Food and entertainment venues are dropping like flies. A once vibrant suburb is struggling to keep open (day and night time) basic services that should be thriving in a suburb like East Sydney / Darlinghurst. For example, I walked along Willian St on a Sunday evening in the middle of February at 6:30pm intending to purchase take-out food. Restaurants that I frequent on a Sunday night are now closed for business. This is unacceptable. Comparable suburbs such as Surry Hills, Redfern and Newtown are not suffering the same 'death by a thousand cuts'.
- Having lived in Berlin for 6 years, I have experienced a healthy non-violent drinking culture. Germany does not need drinking restrictions because of their strong sense of individual and collective responsibility.
- I think the laws have helped reduce the violence, however it seems to me the real goal should be to change the root cause of this violent behaviour in our culture and I would welcome resources being devoted to this.
- Kings Lane that intersects Bourke St has now evidence of frequent drug use. For example, there are regular needle injecting spots littered with used needles and associated biohazard waste that did not exist before the lock-out laws.
- Less damage to private and public property, public urination, vomitus and offensive noise.
- Less violence
- Now, next to no drunk people wandering local streets, stashing alcohol, drinking in streets, indulging in anti-social behaviour (shouting, fighting, urinating, smashing bottles, overturning rubbish bins, destroying plantings, graffiti-ing).
- Several residents I know who are also long term business owners LOVE the lock outs.
- The number of people roaming around drunk and causing issues has significantly reduced since the intro of the current laws.
- There has been an increase in street prostitution and the associated noise, drug dealing/use and violence that is part of this trade. Furthermore, I have had prostitutes and their clients using my front veranda to conduct business at night and have had to confront them to leave the property. This is a danger to myself and others that has co-coincided with the lock-out laws.
- There has definitely been a reduction in alcohol related violence in the Kings Cross and Darlinghurst areas which should be confirmed by the statistics of late night emergency

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admissions at the St Vincents Hospital.

- There have been early morning incidents in our area. The biggest problem in Stanley St is [street] prostitution and shouting after restaurants and pubs close.
- There is a marked difference
- Totally supported by not only resident observations but also police and St Vincents emergency.
- We do not get the worst of the violence at our end of the street but late night street prostitution and foul language does continue.
- We have a hotel diagonally opposite and the noise is much less now. They close at midnight and do not seem to suffer from lack of custom.
- We have a Saturday morning growers market at Taylor Square and it's so nice to walk up the street first thing in the morning to buy beautiful fresh produce without having to run a gauntlet of drunk/druggie people staggering up and down Oxford Street.

3 I would like to see the reform evaluation recommend:

No changes	Some changes (indicate what changes below)
50%	50%

Sample comments:

- Also the 10 pm cut off time is too early and could maybe be changed to 11 pm
- Better since reforms
- I believe the parallel ban on off licence (bottle shop) liquor sales after 10 pm is excessive both in time and in area.
- I urge that no changes be made as I believe the situation has improved dramatically without any adverse impact on the nightlife. Balance is the key.
- I would consider trialling later bottle-shop sales (eg. 10.30, 11 or 12pm) for local residents, if they can prove that they live locally and this did not leave the door open for abuse of the law.
- I would like to see the lock laws right across NSW- I think it's very unfair moving our problems to other areas like Double Bay/Newtown.
- In principle it should only apply in the same areas where the lockout laws are operating as there was no justifiable reason for any change in other areas.
- Keep the restricted hours or even reduce them further.
- No changes to wind back the stricter controls on alcohol-serving premises.
- Perhaps exemptions to the lockouts could be given 2 nights a year – Mardi Gras and NYE.
- Please keep the restrictions – life is much more peaceful.
- Reduce the hours, or leave them as they stand.
- Remove lock-out laws and return Kings Cross to the service provider of the sex-trade and nightlife district that supports ancillary industries such as restaurants, entertainment venues and café's.
- The introduction of this law has made a significant and measurable reduction in lawlessness and anti-social behaviour which is only impacting 90 minutes of trading time for the venues within the zones. This to me seems a very small portion of their total trading hours yet delivers a significant improvement to the local amenity.
- With the improvements in residential amenity I hesitate to recommend any change!

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4 Additional comments:

- East Sydney has always suffered from being on the outer edge of the Kings Cross Police area. Indeed it is on the border of 3 patrols: Surry Hills, Sydney Central and Kings Cross which means over the years it has not had the attention it needs with corresponding (very) extended response wait times. However, I have only called the police once this year and they arrived within MINUTES! so I conclude that with less violence in Kings Cross they actually have the time to respond to other issues in their command.
- Have been told, ad hoc, less activity at St Vincents, but this is not official.
- I believe that it is unreasonable to expect one area to be the late night, bucks night free for all precinct. All area if they choose should have late night venues, the problem is societal, a minority affect the freedom of the majority, and the majority don't feel able or safe to comment on the anti social behaviour so laws have to be passed.
- I regret that Australian drinking practices have necessitated these rules. If social values could be changed we wouldn't have to have these limits but we seem to be saddled with drunkenness and bad behaviour
- I think it would be a significant backward step to reverse this current law especially as the hospital incidents have significantly reduced since the law was introduced and I would not like to see a return to the high levels of ED presentations at our local hospital.
- I would also like to see better training for bouncers, so that they are able to add to the sense of healthy fun rather than detract from it, and are able employ more nuanced approaches to dealing with different people.
- I've lived in London, Paris, San Francisco and Vancouver and they all had restrictions on hours and sale of liquor – there has been a HUGE social media campaign here which has attempted to say that Sydney is all on its own in the world – NOT true!
- If we are to be a 24 hour city we need to address our relationship with alcohol. I recommend seeing the interview with Ben Quilty on ABC Home Delivery, Tuesday 29th March
- Incentivise food! And incentivise cultural activity!
- No one public hospital emergency department or police area command should be overloaded with excess work as result of above to the detriment of local communities.
- Our local pub, The Lord Roberts, has for many years been proactive in communicating with local residents. The pub contributes to our community in a positive way and the relationship it has nurtured with locals is such that should there ever be any problem then residents feel completely at ease in contacting the owner directly to work out a solution. There are good publicans!
- Provide financial incentives for more street food (food trucks, carts, night markets), incentives for pubs and hotels to serve food for longer, and for more small bars and restaurants to open and stay open late.
- Provide financial incentives for pubs and hotels to employ live musicians and other performers. Provide incentives to promote a healthier, happier street culture eg. busking, street art, performances and interactive activities. This will help to take people's focus away from the drinking to get drunk culture. (Of course, care will have to be taken in regards to noise disturbance in residential areas).
- Since the modest alcohol laws were introduced in the greater Sydney area in 2014, we've seen a 32% decrease in violence in the Kings Cross area. A 32% decrease in innocent people being assaulted, or worse, cannot be underestimated.
- The changes have turned our neighbourhood from a grog ghetto into a markedly quieter and more pleasant place to live. Rather than a downturn in the local economy we have seen a

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changed economy with new shops and businesses opening that are not catering to just late-night drinkers.

- The Kings Cross area has been decimated by the introduction of these reforms and it seems unfair to punish venues that are operating responsibly and also patrons who enjoy a late night drink without getting intoxicated (particularly the 10pm closure of bottle shops). What really needs to be addressed is venues serving intoxicated patrons and in general Australians relationship with alcohol and the need for education in schools, less advertising and parents needing to take responsibility for their own consumption of alcohol in front of their children.
- The only people who would oppose the reform are the “party animals” who used to make our life a misery. They think that tipping over bins, smashing bottles and screaming at 3am is somehow funny. Not to us.
- The suggestion that the reforms attack human rights are offensive to me – actually I think it’s my human right to have a peaceful place to live and somehow lock out laws have achieved that. The multitude and growing numbers of residents in this area are having their human rights ignored if we go back to the previous out of control 24 hour disgrace.
- The two closest premises which serve alcohol to my house are Quattro Passi and La Pesa. They both behave in a responsible way and neither creates any problem for our neighbourhood. In particular, Quattro Passi is a welcome local venue with many of us enjoying not only a morning coffee but also an evening glass of wine. Don’t see any drop in their custom so guess they’re doing the right thing?
- The unintended negative consequences on the community near Kings Cross are disproportionate to the problem of alcohol fuelled violence in Kings Cross red light district. Whilst the intent of the lock-out laws is understandable, the implementation has demonstrated this to be wholly inappropriate action that has generated far more serious problems for the local area.
- There are some vocal opponents to the laws calling for the measures to be scrapped. We can’t afford to let that happen. Without the laws, alcohol-fuelled carnage will return to our streets.
- We support a deliberate decentralization of “nightlife” as has occurred naturally in other civilised world cities. One neighbourhood, or city centre where people live should not be used as a playground for the practice of disrespect.
- When we have our meetings with police they all say the same. They can carry on policing for the safety of everyone. The hospital staff agree. The shorter hours have been successful in the Newcastle area.
- With the proliferation of small bars there has been an increase in late night drinking – 1.30am is quite late enough to close doors – if you are drinking to 3am it is as much about getting drunk as normal socialising.

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Appendix A



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Liquor law reform survey – return by 31 March 2016

The reforms ban entry into venues after 1.30am, last alcoholic drinks served at 3am and last bottle shop sales 10pm – for more information: <http://www.nsw.gov.au/newlaws>. The review will consider the impact of the reforms on alcohol-related violence and other harms, on businesses and their patrons, and on community amenity. East Sydney is one of the communities most affected by this reform and it is critical that we make our voices heard.

The purpose of this survey is to collate the views of East Sydney residents. No personal identifying information will be included/disclosed, but for your views to be included and maintain the integrity of the survey, you must be contactable by phone. The survey will be submitted to the *Independent review of the impact of liquor law reform* <http://www.justice.nsw.gov.au/liquorlawreview> and other stakeholders. Attached is an example of an ESNA survey relating to parking meters and this survey will take a similar approach recognising there may be a range of views. You can also submit individual feedback.

If you would like the ESNA survey in paper format email esna@esna.org.au with your address. Also feel free to share with your neighbours. Completed surveys can be returned to esna@esna.org.au or dropped in the ESNA mail box at our meeting room, Doug Heron Room, basement Republic Building, corner Burton and Palmer streets.

Please give your views on the following:

1 Since the reform I believe there has been an improvement in the safety and general amenity in our neighbourhood

Not at all	Not really	Neutral	Somewhat	Very much so

Additional comments:

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2 Since the reform I believe there has been a reduction in alcohol-related violence and anti-social behaviour:

Not at all	Not really	Neutral	Somewhat	Very much so

Additional comments:

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3 I would like to see the reform evaluation recommend:

No changes	Some changes (indicate what changes below)

Additional comments:

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4 Please include any additional comments:

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In order to have your views included please complete the following (identifying personal information will not be shared and neither disclosed nor included in the survey report):

Name	Street	Phone number

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