

Submission to the NSW Liquor Law Review

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my name is Mark Egan, I'm an artist based here in Sydney. I perform simultaneously as a DJ and a projection artist, mixing both audio and my own visual designs at the once. It's a relatively new and groundbreaking artform, and I'm relatively successful at it having been invited to perform all over the world, including South Africa, Indonesia, Colombia, and New Zealand. I've performed Festivals such as Falls Festival, Splendour in the Grass and Field Day, as well as art galleries and cinemas. My work is so unique and influential that global DJ brand Serato invited me to be a product ambassador and showcase my work to the world as an indication of what can be achieved in the world of DJing beyond mixing 2 tracks together.

Having said all that. I don't even register as a blip on the map of talent within the Sydney electronic music world. Talent which incessantly features on festival stages, album and singles charts, song writing credits, radio playlists, and movie and TV soundtracks the world over - talent which very much has its roots in nightclubs. Those late night bars the ruling class love to hate, at worst, and at best show total indifference.

Have no mistake, these laws are an assault on artists. The data shows tickets sales down as much as violence is, and foot traffic to clubs down even more. The only way your committee can interpret the data is not that the laws are leading to people being less violent in the CBD, but that the laws are leading to less people. That's not a clever outcome. It's time to put your thinking cap on, or at least your listening cap to hear and decide on the spread of other options, tried and proven internationally, that allows for reduced violence without limiting the freedoms of the public, and without stifling Sydney's late night arts scene.

It is not for your committee or NSW parliamentarians to determine the merits of this art, that's cultural snobbery, and it's very much outside of your terms of reference. So please remember that when conducting this review.

However, for the sake of highlighting the effect of the damage these laws are causing, let me outline the unmistakable merits of Sydney's nightclub culture; take Sydney's Flume, an electronic music producer who knocked One Direction off the #1 spot on the Australian albums chart, now touring nonstop internationally along with many other Australian nightclub exports like Flight Facilities, Alison Wonderland, What So Not, The Presets and countless more, artists who have all stated they would not be where they are today without a vibrant late night arts scene to support them in their early days.

And I feel that. The number of venues and nights pushing boundaries and creativity has plummeted. Clubs are resorting to lowest common denominator approaches in order to appeal to the masses and save money where the reduced patronage has dented their takings; safe entertainment options, reduced spend on artists and on club fit outs to accomodate more diverse artistry.

It pains me that at the top of my game, in the most populous city in Australia, I have almost no options of where and how I can perform my craft because it sits outside the norm. Emerging artists have even less options, to the point where many are choosing not to nurture their art or to send it overseas. Recently I stopped touring so much and decided to start an audio-visual club night in Sydney to help foster local talent. I reached out to a number of emerging artists who I'd met earlier in my career to see where they were at with their work and if they'd be interested in performing, however found that almost all of them had abandoned their audio-visual art citing a lack of outlets to perform in as the key reason.

The future Flumes and Presets are having their career paths cut short by a populous law that puts a massive 'no entry' sign around Sydney's late night arts precincts.

I've travelled the world with my art but when it comes to finding a venue to perform in my home city, I'm scratching my head.

Common perceptions that these laws are supported by the majority are irrelevant. Governments must not allow the whims of the masses to dictate the freedoms of the lesser. Deciding the fate of a minority demands listening to their needs. Anything else is not democracy, it's mob rule.

If these laws were designed to create homogeneity in the arts, and restrict creativity across Sydney, then they have succeeded. If that's not the aim, then you need to find another option for reducing alcohol related crime and violence because the cost is too high and the target wrong.

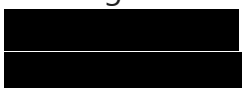
If you are serious about reducing alcohol related deaths, start in the home not the nightclubs. One woman a week dies as a result of domestic violence. Focus and fund the groups and experts working to reduce these deaths.

Curfews are for states of emergency, not for a city that should be riding an ever growing wave of freedom, prosperity, and success at every level and in every corner, no matter how big or small.

Thanks,

Mark.

Mark Egan



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