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Lockout Laws feedback

JF **Jenna Fox** ███████████████████   👍   ↩ Reply all | ∨

To: Liquor Law Review; ⌄   Fri 1/04

Inbox

I'm a resident of Newtown, and lockout laws have been really problematic here. I used to feel really safe at night, even going and having picnics in the dark with friends in the local parks, but since the lockouts came in to effect, the crowd, especially on Fridays and Saturdays, but throughout the week too, has become much more violent. Even just in subtle ways, there's an attitude of us versus them. When they were going out in the city, that was better for the lads and for residents, because they'd go on these big streets like oxford street, and interact with local businesses, but mostly in those common retail areas. Now we have the same thing, except when they're at their peak drunkenness, they order taxis in bulk and a lot of them go straight to Newtown to keep drinking, dumping them in to a densely populated mostly suburban area. Worse yet, King St and Enmore Road are separated by a residential area, one I live in, so often the quickest route between two venues will be passing by houses via residential backstreets.

As a girl in my twenties and part of the queer community, it feels like lockouts haven't solved anything but have forced a lot of people to move around, and shut down a lot of spaces which used to be ours. The Imperial Hotel was once a queer venue, but when lockouts came in, it got bought out by venue operators looking to escape the city and converted in to a dodgy venue for lads, and being located in the middle of suburban Erskineville, ended up being quickly shut down by local police for bringing too much violence in to the area. Now we're left behind with a venue that serves no one, and a piece of queer history lost.

I find it deeply hypocritical that the most violent venue in NSW, The Star casino, is exempted from lockouts. Time has proven these laws were ineffective, and have destroyed many city businesses, but more importantly have destroyed many venues where people of different minority groups used to go to find friends and safety among people they have something in common with, people who understand. We've been scattered out, and big suburban house parties and street protests have failed to fill this niche satisfactorily, and are worse for neighbours and other locals looking for peace and quiet.

Repealing the lockouts wont fix the damage they've done to our shared public spaces, but it may be the first step towards letting the city heal in a way that acknowledges that we are not all the same, but that we can build our culture and have our spaces and live together peacefully if only those spaces are respected and protected.

As for the issue of alcohol fuelled violence: this seems to be an Australian problem. Some other cultures internationally treat alcohol as a depressant, and a cure for violence. Something to calm and sedate, which is certainly my experience of it. I feel with self reflection it is self evident that alcohol is not the source of Australia's violence problem. I suspect there would be violence issues in any space where aggressive young men were herded together in to small cramped spaces, and where violent culture is left to spread unaddressed. I'd like to see government invest in campaigning against this cultural issue, in the same way we deal with young kids speeding to show off to friends when they get cars. Ad campaigns can be effective. There are things we can do to help nudge culture in a better direction which don't disrupt or displace anyone.

In summary: I'd like lockout laws abolished and I'd like government to investigate funding smart public campaigns to help suck some of the pride out of acting in violent ways, drawing on successful experiences with public campaigns for young driver safety. I'd also like government officials banned from accepting money from casinos in the same way they cannot accept bribes from property developers.

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Jenna Fox

████████████, Newtown