

# Regarding the independent review of the impact of liquor law reforms



Franco [REDACTED]



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To: Liquor Law Review; v

Sun 3/04

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I'm sure a lot of people smarter than myself have already written to you both raising similar points of view on the current liquor law reforms, but I thought it would be worth sharing my own experience. I do this in the hope that hearing my story (and the many others like it) would help you overturn the these laws, and hopefully replace them with other safe alternatives.

I am a 35 year old, married man who has worked as an executive in the music and entertainment industry for over half my life. During this time I've had the pleasure of working in some of the world's most exciting cities; London, New York, Paris... The list goes on. But no matter where I worked, I was always proud to brag about my hometown, Sydney.

This had nothing to do with the fact that I could simply 'drink till dawn' or 'impulse-buy a bottle of wine after 10pm' as Mike Baird stated in his now infamous Facebook post on February 9th. It had to do with the fact that the bustling nightlife culture here pre-lock out was world class and people traveled from all over the world to experience it. Fantastic late night food options, bars, clubs and live music venues all operating within the law to provide this global city with safe night time culture and economy.

Unfortunately, over the last 24 months I've had to tell another story. Not only one of embarrassment, but also of frustration. Frustration that the city is very quickly losing its identity. Have you been out on the streets after dark in the lockout zone? The term 'ghost town' has been widely used by the media to describe the atmosphere, and for good reason.

No one in their right mind is in any way arguing against safety needing to be the most important issue for the government (the one punch deaths which got us here in the first place are a horrific tragedies), but I, along with many others, can't help but feel all this could have been avoided had the government taken measures to combat the issues of alcohol related violence, rather than slap a band-aid solution on it. There was no consultation with the community, just a knee jerk reaction to the media frenzy after those senseless acts of violence.

I'm not a politician and do not have all the answers, but I imagine if community groups, local businesses, police and lawmakers all got together, some good (and safe) alternatives to these blanket laws could have been implemented. Off the top of my head, these could have included:

- More police presence in entertainment districts (unfortunately over the last 10 years the only time I have seen a good police presence in entertainment precincts is when there has already been an incident, not patrolling and preventing incidents in the first place)
- Provide free and frequent transport options (eg. free bus services from Kings Cross, Darlinghurst and Surry Hills to Central Station between 1am-5am when taxis are scarce and patrons are trying to get home. Melbourne's free CBD tram system operating all night is a fantastic case study!)
- Harsher penalties for individuals causing alcohol fueled violence, anti-social behavior
- Not punishing those venues operating with clean records and working to uphold a safe environment

These are just four ideas I came up with in the last five minutes. Given the brains trust of experts currently consulting on this issue, I trust you will see there are far smarter alternatives to the current laws. I hope to see the introduction of intelligent, fair and above all, safer options than what we are currently living with.

Thank you for your time.

Alexander Franco

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