

Lock Out Laws Review

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Dear Justice Callinan

My local MP Bruce Notley-Smith has recommended I write to you as I understand you are conducting the review in to the so-called lock-out laws.

I would like to lodge my strong conviction that the laws remain in place.

I am in my 40's. I grew up in Darlinghurst from 1978 (my parents lived there from the 1960's) and throughout my teenage years and adult life, I never experienced the kind of violence, threatening behaviour and danger that I was faced with at the height of the all-night drunked-ness that overcame Kings Cross before the lock our laws were introduced.

As a child and then teenager, I endured the era Detective Roger Rogerson and his posse of psycho murderess police. Gangs of neo-nazi skin heads who loved to bash anyone they felt like. Homophobic Westies who loved to randomly hit anyone who wasn't ugly and wearing a Westy shirt. Punks, drunks and yobbos. What is interesting, even though I was a pretty free ranging kid who spent a lot of time wondering the streets at night and well in to the after midnight hours, it was possible to see danger a long way off and in most cases, there was fair warning that you were in a dangerous situation. In other words, you had to put yourself in danger before you found herself likely to be bashed or threatened.

Fast forward to 2010 and I am at a friends 40th in Kings Cross at an upmarket venue. All of us middle class professionals. We leave the venue at 1.30am and immediately I find myself, with my wife and two of our female friends, being openly verbally threatened, the women being harassed and myself being the target of several blokes who 'wanna fight'. We made a hasty exit, our dress code being enough to get us in a taxi straight away. I passed this off as a one-off. That is until I found myself again the cross a couple years later in an almost identical situation of leaving a corporate Christmas party at 1am and walking in to the same confrontational and dangerous situation on the main drag of the Kings X.

Now let's fast forward to post-lock out. Emboldened to venture out in to Kings X, I am repeating my late night exit and instead of walking out in to a drunken orgy of aggression and threatening behaviour, I walk out in to a normal, safe, night life.

Of course, as you well know, the statistics bare our the reality of how effective the laws have been.

There are a couple other points I want to add that are in counterpoint to the campaign that is being run against the laws. The reality is Kings X has been going through a gentrification for more than 15 years as hotel after hotel are turned in to high rise apartments that are expensive due to their proximity to the city and eastern suburbs. It is inevitable that the kind of people who have stumped up \$1m plus for an apartment do not want to live in a place where drunken yobbos rule the streets.

For those with their head in the sand and the naysayers, they might want to note that Sydney is an incredibly vibrant city where there are literally four-score events on almost every night of the week and tonnes of entertainment, bands, clubs, galleries, debates, concerts and thousands of great restaurants to choose from. This was not the case in 1985, the apparent halcyon days that are referred to by the anti-lock-out law campaigners.

People do not need to go to Kings Cross to get sex any more. There is Tinder, dozens of dating sites, dozens of legal brothels all over the city from Parramatta to Penrith, Southerland to Sydenham. If you want to buy drugs, you don't need to hit up a drug dealer on the street of Kings X, it is well publicised in the Daily Telegraph that you can call a mobile phone and have your drugs home delivered.

When people use comparisons to Paris, Amsterdam and Barcelona, they are forgetting that in none of those cities or cultures is

3/15/2016

Lock Out Laws Review - Liquor Law Review

binge drinking acceptable. They're also forgetting that there are flourishing night cultures in these cities as much due to weather (you don't get up at 7am to go to the beach in Amsterdam) as there is due to their habitation which is generally much more dense, which encourages people to get out of their 30sqm apartment at night.

The reality is binge drinking and pre-loading combined with powerful drugs such as Ice are a key cause of violent behaviour. Remove the binge drinking factor and you generally remove the potential for the lethal and violent combination of amphetamines and grog.

The reality is these laws are not Sydney wide. They only affect an incredibly tiny number of people (maybe 5,000 at most) who desperately want to be able to move from venue to venue after 1.30am in a tiny part of Sydney getting more and more drunk.

It would not surprise me if, behind the scenes, the Hotels Association and alcohol lobby are quietly pushing the social media campaign to abolish the laws.

In summary, from an ageing once-anachist who grew in the affected area, I entirely support the lock-out laws so my daughter (when she old enough) can venture out on to the streets of Sydney without fear of being bashed by a drunk.

Yours sincerely
Marcus

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