



# Lockout Law review submission

KL

Kimberley Low

To: Liquor Law Review; 



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Thank you for inviting the public to voice our opinions regarding the lockout laws.

I am a Sydney photographer who photographs restaurants, bars, cafes and all things hospitality for a living. On average, I photograph 4-5 venues a week and have had the unique privilege of speaking to an diverse mix of business owners, managers, employees and patrons from all over Sydney. I also have a degree specialising in urban geography and am well-versed when it comes to discussions on urban rights, economy and liveability.

I can say with confidence that the lockout laws have been extremely detrimental to Sydney, its culture and its inhabitants on various levels.

Firstly, there is the negative consequence on Sydney's economy and jobs. It is not only venues that struggle, but also their employees, many of whom are students or other low-income individuals that depend on the availability of hospitality jobs to survive. These people have day time commitments, be it their studies or their families, and the lockout laws have unfairly punished these individuals by putting them out of work and more dependent on social welfare to survive.

And then there are the businesses themselves. This doesn't just refer to bars and clubs, but also all the surrounding businesses that depend on the existence of a night culture, such as restaurants, convenience stores, taxi drivers etc. Many of these businesses are small, owner-operated businesses whereby owners have invested tens of thousands of dollars into their business that they then depend on to feed their families and stay sheltered - it is incredibly unfair and painful to see these businesses and owners suffer when they have done nothing to contribute to alcohol-fueled violences.

Finally, there is the loss of cultural diversity itself, spanning across the variety of bars and clubs to restaurants and food venues themselves. With the ever-increasing cost of Sydney's already exorbitant rent prices, put together with the loss of foot traffic and patrons to these venues as a result of the lockout laws, this means that food venues have had to re-configure their menus to maintain revenue by selling items that are low-cost and in-trend, as opposed to maintaining their original range of products. The number of formerly good-quality, medium priced restaurants that have either closed down to become burger/fried chicken venues or changed their menus to feature these dishes is maddening, and while it may seem superficial, I can say with full confidence that it is not a coincidence that the costs and limitations of running a food

business have pushed business to make these decisions. The long term sustainability and originality of these venues suffer as a result, and the food and beverage landscape of Sydney now looks like one big monotonous tide of unhealthy, dressed up over-priced junk food. I am not kidding.

I feel compelled to write this email because, simply put, the lockdown laws are not doing any good for the long-term future of Sydney and all its players - the inhabitants, the media, businesses, authorities, police, politicians are all at war with each other over the issue, and it is incredibly frustrating to see that instead of a well-considered, multi-faceted approach to tackling the issue of alcohol-fueled violence, the government has chosen to punish innocent businesses and citizens over the actions of a very small few.

So what is the solution?

I think that the approach needs to be two-fold. First are the 7 key actions as proposed by the Keep Sydney Open movement and supported by thousands:

- 1 Developing best-practice **policing** strategies;
- 2 Investing in 24/7 public **transport**;
- 3 Implementing integrated urban **planning reform**;
- 4 Encouraging diversification of **after-dark activities**;
- 5 Establishing anti-violence **education & intervention** campaigns;
- 6 **Incentivising well-run venues**; and
- 7 Appointing a **Night Mayor**.

The above seven points are practical and necessary on a macro level. BUT on top of this, on a micro individual level, we need to ask ourselves, what is causing our young men to be violent when drinking alcohol? This does not happen in the majority of other international, developed cities, so why is it happening here?

After speaking every day to different individuals from all levels of society and observing how we behave and interact with each other, my humble answer to that would be that we don't have an issue with alcohol, we have an issue with the meaning of masculinity, community and culture in itself. Sydney, for all its diversity, sees very little inter-cultural, inter-personal bonding, community and trust. When we don't feel a sense of camaraderie with each other, we do not feel a responsibility to treat each other with kindness and respect. Instead, mistrust, isolation and a sense of 'otherness' takes place, and mixed together with the fact that male depression is an overtly occurring but under-documented and seldom talked about issue in our society (80 percent of suicides in Australia are men), we can start to see how the poor psychological health of a young man can manifest in various and dangerous ways, one of them being through alcohol consumption. Alcohol-fuelled violence and anti-social behaviour are not a symptom of alcohol use, but a symptom of wider, deeper psychological issues for individuals who do not have other means of addressing these issues and expressing themselves.

Bringing this back to the topic of the lockout laws, this is why community, trust and togetherness are so important. There is, sadly, no quick-fix solution to alcohol-fuelled violence, but we can start by being inclusive, understanding, positive and trusting of each other. In the same way the people who have voted for the state government have put their trust in the government to best take care of NSW, the government must also reciprocate this trust by listening to us and facing the truth that the overwhelming majority of us are not responsible for and do not contribute to this violence, and should therefore not be punished. By imposing the lockout laws and maintaining the stance that the lockout laws are the 'best' solution to the issue is a grave disrespect and misjudgement of the society which it governs. Instead, by applying the 7 key actions proposed above, not only will this provide meaningful, viable alternatives to the lockout laws, this will also be a start in encouraging and fostering the sense of community that we so badly need.

I hope I have been able to contribute to the decision-making process on this matter, or at the very least provided some food for thought in regards to the issue the lockout laws attempt to address; I am happy to be contacted for further discussion. Thank you for reading my email.

Sincerely,  
**Kimberley Low**  
Photographer

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