

Submission from Owen Matthews re Sydney lockout laws

OM Owen Matthews [REDACTED]

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Hello,

I write as a Sydney resident that has lived and worked in a few great cities around the world and travelled to many more. I spent eight years living in London and observed there a progressive, fairly tolerant society and a vibrant nightlife culture. Over there the responsibility of not drinking too much is firmly upon the drinker, not the publican. Crash your car and kill someone after too many pints and it is your fault for being an idiot, not the pub that served you those pints. But my submission to you is not about today's RSA laws, I am writing to state my position against the "lockout laws" currently in force in Sydney CBD.

I believe that vibrant international cities (like Sydney used to be) need to exercise balance and tolerance alongside offering the kind of entertainment befitting of such a great world city. Having a good night out to many people may involve dancing and having a drink beyond 3am and certainly shouldn't restrict a change of venues beyond 1:30am. A good night out is not forcing a whole lot of people to need to leave an area all at the same time as they cannot get into a licensed venue, much as they might wish to and this refusal of entry might anger them.

I believe the lockout laws were introduced as an ill-considered response to the pressing issue of alcohol-fuelled violence in certain parts of Sydney. The problem here is that it is a punishment upon everyone and serves to push the problem elsewhere, as for example the increase in incidents in Newtown has shown.

Appropriate legislation should be one method of addressing such problems in such a large city. I too want the one-punch deaths and other violence to cease. But the issue here is not so much a late-night alcohol availability problem. It is a d*ckhead problem. And it's quite hard to legislate against d*ckheads. They will still drink to excess and look for trouble, or their inebriation will trigger their inner anger or whatever else that is their underlying problem which makes them get a bit punchy. Yes, the current laws prevent them from having one too many beers at the Kings Cross hotel at 3:30am and consequently punching someone. But they may just choose to spend the night somewhere else, get inebriated earlier in the night and punch someone outside the lockout areas in Penrith, Newtown, Bondi or maybe even Balmain. How do you solve a deep issue within Australian society where individuals feel compelled to drink to excess and cause problems for other people?

I don't have the answers, but I want to see the lockout laws repealed and a more sensible era of protecting, nurturing and (appropriately) policing Sydney nightlife come into effect. Lawmakers, perhaps spend some time in Melbourne and see how they do it. Go to a few places in Melbourne after 1:30am and see how it just works, with most people drinking responsibly and without anyone getting their head kicked in.

Finally, the double standard in relation to the Star casino and the new Crown casino at Barangaroo must be addressed. Granting special favours for big taxpayers while many other businesses suffer is simply a terrible bias and smacks of corruption. I would much rather be sipping whisky at 3:30am in the Baxter Inn than be amongst the human zoo that is the Star on a Saturday night.

Yours longing for an all-night dance in the city (and a few responsibly-drunk beers) soon.

Sincerely,

Owen Matthews

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

(please don't publish my addresses on any internet site)