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NSW Liquor Law Review



Clint O'Hanlon



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To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to express my opposition to current manifestation of the "lockout laws" and the legislation, surrounding them.

As Marketing Manager of The World Bar in Kings Cross, I am mortified to say that we are one of the last remaining venues in a once-vibrant, diverse and thriving "entertainment district" of Sydney.

Eight years ago, when I started as a night manager at The World Bar, the area had commenced a period of growth and community improvement that would steadily continue until the implementation of the lockout laws. Over that time, through measured, evidence-based and thoughtful legislative decisions, venues had been able to adapt and improve their plans of management, increasing safety whilst continuing to thrive.

Despite increasing pressure from authorities and regular visits from law enforcement officers seemingly hell-bent on finding the most inconsequential minutia to interrogate, chastise and often fine us for, we still managed to provide good quality entertainment in an increasingly more safe environment. I feel that it is important to point out that there isn't a SINGLE VENUE in Sydney who would want any kind of violence or negative outcomes for patrons going on in their establishments. These people are in the business of hospitality and a customer having negative experiences is the polar opposite of their modus operandi.

The two deaths that sparked the political and media furore, eventually compelling NSW Parliament to pass these laws should, of course, not be glossed over. They are a tragedy and a sad reminder of Australia's culture of violence. They also occurred early in the evening, on the street and subsequently outside any venues with extensive plans of management in place. Does this not place them in the jurisdiction of the NSW Police Force?

I fully understand that implementing a genuine solution to a cultural of violence is an enormous undertaking. A government that uses licensed venues as a scapegoat instead of admitting to the task at hand makes me, for the first time in my life, ashamed to call myself a Sydneysider.

As I mentioned, The World Bar is still trading and working with very limited resources to continue to support the arts community as we have always done. Live music, art and performance have always been cornerstones of our business model and, beyond that, a large part of the lives of the people making up our family. Our Friday night event used to showcase fifteen bands. That number is now closer to two or three and remains as more

a labour of love, rather than a profitable business decision. Thought of in terms of forums for artistic outlet, this loss is immense to the music community of Sydney and exists at a venue that is still open. The live music venue closures that have resulted from the lockout laws have been far more detrimental.

I'm sure you will receive hundreds of submissions with great examples of alternative measures to the lockouts as there are hundreds of more logical, less socially and economically detrimental solutions at hand and a vocal community of thoughtful industry professionals and citizens ready to voice them. Subsequently, I'll keep my suggestions brief and in line with things the hospitality industry has been actively requesting and privately funding for years:

- More high-visibility policing in the streets.
- More balanced and consultative relations between law enforcement and venues.
- Better late night public transport options.
- Education programs on everything from the affects of drugs and alcohol and the repercussions of violence to individual rights and legislative changes.

Along with the already thorough and extensive plans of management in place inside venues these measures would serve to disperse crowds and minimise anti-social behaviour on the streets and, through education, in future generations of those intending on enjoying the night life this supposed international city has to offer.

Finally, though the laws were hurriedly passed within weeks, I implore you to use the generous duration of this review to exercise a more balanced, evidence-based and thoughtful approach to any decisions made. Two casinos, a bridge and an opera venue do not make Sydney a vibrant city.

Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me directly on [REDACTED]

Sincerely,

Clint O'Hanlon



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