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Submission to the review of alcohol

LP Luigi Palombi 



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To: Liquor Law Review; 

Sun 3/04

Inbox

In the 18 years that I have been a member of the Elizabeth Bay/Potts Point/Darlinghurst community (which surround place known as 'Kings Cross') I can testify to the fact, not opinion, that the levels of safety, comfort and needs of the community has been markedly improved by the so-called 'lockout law'.

In 1998 this community was very different to what it is today. It was more of a tourist/red light/entertainment area. It was also a residential area. However, the needs of the residents were secondary. The South Sydney Council was the relevant local council at the time. And it was appalling for residents. There were used syringes in the streets. Drug addicts would be seen in the early hours (say 7am on a Sunday morning) either injecting in public or visibly effected by their drug taking. Young people would have left their hallmark vomit or urinating calling cards around the place after consuming far too much alcohol. And the amount of rubbish visible in the streets was not only depressing but disgusting.

The 'residents' had to tolerate bad behaviour. I was once stopped by a group of young men outside the Empire Hotel, then a 24 hour/7 day a week pub, at 7am on my way to have a swim at the Cook and Philip Park Pool. They were drunk and they were menacing. I was minding my own business, but they decided to stop and 'talk' to me. They had no business doing that. And what might have seemed like a joke to them at the time, came across very threatening to me. This is one example, but there are more. I can assure the Committee that this kind of intoxicated driven anti-social behaviour was clearly apparent on the streets, especially on a Sunday morning.

Then there was the noise generated by loud voices in the early hours of the morning. Drunks have no idea of how loud they are when they are saying goodbye to their friends as they get into taxis or their cars to drive back to their homes in some 'safe' suburb of Sydney far far away from the scene of their 'entertainment' .

I am very pleased to report that as the community has slowly but surely gentrified, with the closure of tourist hotels and their replacement with apartments, its amenity has improved significantly. Shops that cater for the residents have replaced the postcard and tourist shops that dominated the area. Boutiques and cafes have replaced the sex shops and tobacco outlets. And as families have found home in the area, so the childrens' park at Fitzroy Gardens has become a mecca of family life that is wholesome and desirable. It's recent upgrade was long overdue.

The residents also like a drink and they appreciate the area's diversity. It is still an area that attracts tourists and some of these are backpackers. These young people who come from overseas seek employment in the many cafes, bars and restaurants that now mostly meet the needs of residents. And residents are supportive. So businesses that meet the needs of residents and the tourists that come to stay in the area are doing very well indeed.

The lockout law is a step in the right direction for the residents of this community and, I believe, also for the overseas and interstate tourists that stay here. They provide a safety net for these people. And they, importantly, have significantly decreased the level of anti-social or undesirable behaviour that was so obvious before the law took effect.

To be sure, the look and feel of the 'Cross' has changed since the lockout law, however, overall that change is welcomed by residents. The lockout law has recalibrate the 'balance' of interests away from bar, club and pub owners and their patrons (who mostly travel to the area to get drunk and 'enjoy' themselves only to return to their quiet homes in suburban Sydney) and towards the residents that have chosen to invest their money and their lives in this area. They are also ratepayers. They are also part of the community. They are entitled to walk the streets in the expectation that they will not have to witness drunks vomiting in the gutters or urinating against community property. And most relevantly, they are entitled to feel safe.

The lockout law is a good law and I fully support it and the Baird government decision to support it. It is a fair law. And it's working.

Regards,

Luigi Palombi

Community supporter