

Submission to the review of alcohol

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As an 18-year resident of the area, I have seen  go through many changes. I would compare the dramatic and favourable improvements to the area to the introduction of the Heroin Injecting Centre. When the Centre opened, almost overnight you stopped seeing needles in the street and people injecting heroin in gutters and shopfronts. After the lockout laws were introduced, again almost overnight, the sight of young girls crying and vomiting in gutters late at night vanished.

My long-held habit of never walking down either Bayswater Rd or Darlinghurst Rd owing to the heaving and unpredictable crush of rowdy party-goers can be relaxed. Friday and Saturday nights have been nights where for as long as I can remember, it was never worth going out - public transport was a nightmare (even the route of the 324/325 buses had to change due to the many thousands of people clogging Bayswater Rd), restaurants etc were difficult to get into and the atmosphere was always a bit hysterical, especially if there were large groups of pre-clubbing diners, and the sight of drunk people in such large numbers on the street always seemed a sad combination of desperate and menacing. As I would never actually go into any of the venues, I cannot comment on what the experience was like, but I can assure you that as a resident, I had to deal with the fallout every weekend. The street-cleaners would do a mammoth job of taking care of the astonishing amount of broken glass and vomit but they were never going to be responsible for the human detritus after a long night of drinking. The "lock out laws" have taken care of that.

As for the argument that small businesses have suffered, it was astonishing how many opportunistic businesses sprang up in the area when the Bayswater Rd precinct really became as big as it got (which I can attest as a longtime resident was only relatively recent), providing goods or services for late night revellers. These kinds of businesses made the most noise about suffering when the laws were introduced. Many are slowly closing up and the shopfronts are being replaced by businesses that actually recognise that the area is also residential (I would argue that as statistically speaking, being one of the densest populated suburbs in Australia, it makes it foremost a residential area not an entertainment precinct). The sense of community has always been strong but as more community-focussed businesses are opening, the whole area (Kings Cross reaches into Potts Point, Darlinghurst and Elizabeth Bay) has a sense of vibrancy, relevancy and self-containment. No one among my many neighbours and friends and acquaintances has complained about not being able to buy a bottle of wine after a certain hour from a bottle shop; missing queuing for 2 hours to get into a bar on the weekend; getting a slice of suspect pizza at 2 a.m.; having to step over drunk girls in gutters with their skirts up over their knickers and jumping over wet patches on the roads and footpaths as it could almost certainly be some kind of bodily fluid; never really going out locally on the big nights as the

atmosphere was so ugly; or having to walk home from the station after a certain hour on Friday and Saturday via back streets, thus avoiding Darlinghurst Rd.

I love that where once I used avoidance strategies in my own neighbourhood on the weekend, I can in a sense reclaim the streets. I may never have had to personally deal with an assault or a frightening situation as I always used common sense, the idea that my neighbourhood became a personal no-go-zone at night when the 'bridge and tunnel crowd' descended was always offensive to me. As a rate-payer and strong supporter of local businesses for 18 years, it is only fair that I get to enjoy my area in the way I like, when I like. The alcohol laws have given me that and I am extremely grateful.

Regards,

Vanessa Palombi

Community supporter