

Hello,

I am a 38 year old Australian. I was born in Sydney, raised in Hornsby and spent the better part of my adult life working in and around the [REDACTED]

I grew up in a period of Sydney that the licensing board of NSW probably doesn't look fondly upon, where illegal raves and inner city warehouse parties were a weekly occurrence. By 1995 the party was over.. Sydney's underground rave culture was all but extinguished and the community around it scrambled to find a way to legally continue, what in its essence was an illegal counter culture.

It didn't take long before Sydney's club scene began to flourish as the migration from illegal and often unsafe warehouse parties moved into sanitized and sanctioned venues.

The culture evolved and adapted to its new environment. It thrived as big business (meriton etc) started to cotton on to the fact that serious money could be made servicing this community which had until this time, been provided from within, who undoubtedly were also benefiting from illegal drug trades synonymous with rave culture.

As we aged, the culture changed, as it does with every generation. It adapted.

This culture was supported and nurtured, resulting in some of Sydney's longest running regular events such as Frigid, Club Kooky and Mad Racket which all ran for more than 10 years and have been the launchpad for many of Sydney's and Australia's electronic Musicians such as Urthboy, Hermitude, Deepchild, Pnau.. all international touring artists, all with their roots in this culture.

Electronic music is intrinsically connected to late night culture. It also has a long history and undeniable connection to illegal drugs. One thing it has never had a connection to, even in its most brutal and aggressive genres is Violence.

The inner city violence that has spawned these laws are not connected to Electronic music, nor late night club culture in general.

For the past 6 years I have lived in Berlin Germany, one of the party cities of the world. Every weekend the city is flooded with tourists flying in from all over Europe on cheap easyjet tickets, often without any luggage at all, to spend the entire weekend drinking, partying and generally getting trashy in any one of Berlin establishments.

People drink openly on the street, on the trains, in the queues waiting to enter the club.. everywhere. You can buy alcohol at pretty much every convenience store, cheaply.. you can buy it at the supermarket, cheaply.. you can even buy it at the petrol station (which even I find kind of insane) .. but my point is alcohol is everywhere and its cheap. I can buy a whole case of beer here cheaper than I was able to buy a 6 pack in Sydney when I was there last year.

And in all the time I have lived here, I have never felt unsafe to walk at night, even late at night.. and I live in Wedding, which has traditionally known as one of the sketchier parts of the city.

Violence happens, obviously. Every city has violence, but the common understanding here in Berlin is that the only people you need to be wary of are the tourists.. The Germans themselves understand and respect the freedom they have. Also personally I think a large part of this relaxed nature is that once you allow greater access, people naturally are less interested in getting completely smashed, which is kind of a national past time in Australia.

While illegal, drugs are also common in Berlin. Marijuana especially. While illegal, the police focus more on serious crime and any amount under 15 grams is simply confiscated. And even with that, you would need to be smoking right in front of them for them to bother.

I say all this to illustrate a contrast.

I am not advocating for legal drugs or cheaper alcohol.. What I am trying to say is that Sydney for a long time has been cracking down hard on drugs and alcohol.. and the direct result of this crackdown has been more unruly behaviour.

NSW deploys more sniffer dogs at music festivals and parties .. the direct result is people take all their drugs at once before entering the festival and then overdoses and drug related deaths increase.

By pushing these agenda's, the predictable outcomes are realised.. and that is then used to push the agenda further.

This is not to speak at all of the situation where the Casino's are somehow excluded from these laws.. You know, because Gambling related violence isn't really a thing. I digress .. although im sure in years to come there will be some sort of commission or hearing into these all too cozy deals.

All the while, Sydney Culture dies. Sydney music dies. Sydney vibrancy dies.

Musicians need venues, clubs and a community. Artists need spaces. Not everything fits into the White Christian morals of Mike Baird and Barry O'Farrell before him.

Yes something needed to be done about Kings Cross, but I fear the damage has already been done and the developers have finally got what they wanted.

I expect this submission will just sit on a pile somewhere, and it won't be read.. or if it is, it will very likely just fall on deaf ears. I hope that it doesn't.. but sadly the reality of the process and the end game here is worth too much money and too much power to the people who are running the game to let it be swayed.

As any teenager will attest, an over bearing parent will only push the child further away.. The same these laws are just regulating things that self regulate completely harmlessly without their interference, and infact the regulation itself is what is causing the problems to begin with.

Also I completely understand a lot, if not most of the topics I covered in this submission fall outside the jurisdiction of your office.. but I include them to give a full picture of what is happening to Sydney as a result of these laws, the result of laws passed over the past 20 years.

Granted I have been watching from Berlin, but a lot of my friends are musicians and artists still living in Sydney.. and I know the effect these laws are having.

Drug culture will continue regardless of laws. By definition their illegal nature will ensure that. The harder the line the government takes, the more dangerous the outcomes are for those drawn to that culture. But it wont stop it happening. Its an abyss.. and the further the government pushes, the closer it gets.

Lockout laws go hand in hand with this.

Regards  
Tom