

Sydney lockout law review submission

Mark Pigott [REDACTED]

Fri 4/03/2016 2:53 PM

To: Liquor Law Review <liquorlawreview@justice.nsw.gov.au>;

Dear sir,

My name is Mark Pigott, I was up until last September 2015, the newsagent at [REDACTED]. My family ran this newsagent in all of its forms including the famous and now gone paper stands for over 83 years. So I was the third generation of the Pigott family known as the newsagent family at [REDACTED]. Safe to say we were the most famous newsagent in Sydney if not NSW, we traded 24 hours around the clock, 7 days a week since 2001. Before this we had the famous paper stand opposite, trading around the clock. The newsagent ran until 11pm prior to 2001.

All of this history should make my opinion and knowledge of the area extremely relevant. As devastating as the closure of our newsagent was and continues to be for my family and although the area and street faced numerous challenges over the years, Oxford street has been on one knee for near a decade due to a multitude of conflicting influences and years of neglect and buck passing by successive governments and councils.

Without question the final straw for us and the street was the implementation of the lockout laws on the eve of The Mardi Gras parade in 2014, now 2 years ago. What these laws accomplished overnight was the jamming shut that was the revolving door of the night time economy of Sydney and were ever these laws were enforced. To this day it is beyond my comprehension why the NSW state government of the day introduced these laws on the eve of Mardi Gras, Sydney's second biggest annual event. Absolutely clueless. I could not begin to tell you of the patrons from around the world from interstate and local who voiced their disbelief to us as we stood behind our counter at the newsagent from that very first Sunday morning, as we traded 24 hours. They all said without exception that they would never be back to Sydney and or Mardi Gras. Social Media from that day forward went on overdrive. Alarm bells for us at the newsagent have been ringing ever since. Culminating in our decision to close our Newsagency in September of last year, after 83 years.

We tried but failed to tell the NSW state government of the profound and obvious differences between Oxford street, Taylor Square, Darlinghurst and Kings Cross. But what would we know as a business trading in the area for over 83 years. Darlinghurst and Oxford street has never been Kings Cross and never will be. The areas clientele, vibe, pub and club scene are distinctly different to that of Kings Cross. Anyone who lived and or worked in the area would be able to tell you exactly the same thing. Opinions to the contrary by those who are not from the area let alone visit the city regularly, have no real first hand knowledge and valid opinion. Needless to say Oxford street has been thrown under the same bus as Kings Cross with these lock out laws, and continuous to suffer the same absolutism.

Kings Cross was a special case, that was allowed to multiply and then fester into one street of every kind of adult entertainment and licensed venue over successive decades and NSW state governments, with various degrees of part time oversight.

Simple as that. Kings Cross attracted all and sundry from all parts of Sydney along with a multitude of interstate and overseas tourist.

Was it a boiling pot under a microscope just waiting to implode, maybe. Was it an out of control zoo that could not be tamed by any other measures besides what has happened under the implementation of these lock out laws. HARDLY.

The NSW state government led by the then Premier Mr O'Farrell recalled parliament early, after a summer barrage of negative media led by the two major newspapers in Sydney. The constant and high pitched megaphone diplomacy conducted by sections of the media forced the Premier to change his and the governments opinion [check hansard]. They literally cobbled together a multitude of bills practically overnight, nobody saw or new that it was coming, least of all the governments "opposition". The government threw the bill and all of its detail in front of the

parliament all but a few hours before a vote and subsequent passing of these lockout laws ensued, on the 30th of January 2014.

As the government had such a thumping majority in the house and no real affective opposition the devil was always in the details and nobody had the time,fortitude and or vision to stand in the way of these laws.All accept the independent member for Sydney,Mr Alex Greenwich, who's speech in parliament was the most accurate appraisal by any member of the house of any side and shows that he was one of very few that had read and understood the details of what the house was about to make law.[Its on hansard].Only problem was that he was an independent.

Fast forward two years and what can we see.I do not want to say we told you so,but we at the Newsagency could see what was going to happen and only accelerate under these laws.There are now well over one hundred for lease signs along Oxford street and many more along Darlinghurst road as Kings Cross will never recover to be an entertainment quarter again.Along with almost countless associated careers and jobs as the very industries that use to thrive within and around the city have vanished as quickly as all the venues,restaurants,pubs,clubs and retail outlets have closed and gone out of business.

The now NSW Premier,Mr Baird ,once the darling of social media and how to use it affectively has gone from 'Teflon Mike ' to "Casino Mike" overnight.His recent Facebook post championing Sydney's nightlife as never more vibrant amongst other pearlers, only proves just how clueless he and his advisers are.Was it any surprise that the very demographic he was preaching too would so affectively slap his comments down with over 15000 negative comments within hours.

I am sure the remarkably accurate tirade by Mr Matt Barrie will be apart of the many submissions put forward to this review.His exposita was and remains the best and most accurate piece I have seen and read on this subject in over 2 years.My only regret for the city of Sydney is that it has taken these 2 years for someone like Mr Barrie to have put the whole story together so perfectly.

Finally I would like to support groups like Keep Sydney Open as someone who is trying to bring thoughtful,constructive and realistic solutions to the conversation.If only this conversation was around prior to 2014 so as to show the then state government that there are and were better ways of accomplishing what we all want for the streets of Sydney.

That do not involved abliterating whole suburbs and their economies as is the case at present.Were was the conversation around many of the ideas that Keep Sydney Open have put forward over recent weeks.I as many calling for change, are not against the doctors,nurses,paramedics and police despite some within their ranks calling detractors as self interest Rabel raises of a minority group.It is a well known fact that these laws would not have saved the two innocent lives lost.

What if that was your business and or career gone almost overnight due to ill conceived and lazy government legislation.There must be something intrinsically wrong if a very long serving and surviving family business,despite many challenges over many a year,is now gone in a matter of moments.

I along with many now await this review, and to see if the NSW state government under the advise of this review can be contrite enough to realise that they got it so wrong.I encourage all to look again and realise that there are many other smarter ways.I look forward to the day that Sydney can once again claim to be a world city open and ready for the worlds business and not just a pretty postcard.

'Regards,
Mark Pigott
X manager/owner [redacted] Newsagency

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Sent from my iPad