

Submission to the Callinan Liquor Law Review.

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

We write to lodge a submission before Justice Callinan.

My wife and I are strong supporters of the need for the review to take place, and earnestly hope that it will lead to the repeal of the February 2014 laws commonly known as "Lockout Laws".

In 2004 we moved from Mosman to Potts Point specifically or substantially because of the colour, texture, and grittiness of the Kings Cross neighbourhood. The area was full of interesting bars and clubs for us to visit and colourful people to watch, talk with, or avoid. It had a vibrancy Mosman lacked. It offered bars and clubs where emerging bands and musicians could get an audience and maybe their first start in the entertainment industry. Of course all this comes with noise. It means crowds on the streets calling out loudly to their friends, and having fun late into the night. It was happy noise, far more welcome than the motorbike noise from which the area suffers. But many supporters of the lockout laws moved into the area because some of Kings Cross's most well-known hotels were converted into apartment blocks. To move into a noisy neighbourhood and then complain about that noise is like moving into Mascot and complaining about the aircraft.

Some points we would raise in support of our submission are:-

- a) Supporters of lockout laws claim noise levels have reduced – this claim is correct and we regret the loss of that cheerful happy noise.
- b) Why on earth can't I buy liquor from a liquor store after 10pm?
- c) Supporters of lockout laws claim the area now feels safer – this claim is complete rubbish. Before February 2014 we felt safer walking the streets of Kings Cross late at night than we ever felt in Mosman. In Mosman streets were dark, deserted, and forbidding. Before the lockout laws commenced, Kings Cross streets were well lit, full of people, and we absolutely felt safe. But now, there are far fewer people around day or night other than ice addicts and some of the homeless. We do not feel safe on the streets here anymore.
- d) Government interference in free competition – the lockout laws have unfairly disadvantaged businesses in the CBD, Kings Cross and Potts Point compared to Double Bay, Surry Hills, Newtown, etc. We are appalled and can hardly believe it can be possible for a State Government to make laws that apply in some areas but don't apply in others, and in the process destroying some fantastic businesses. Excluding the casinos in Sydney from these laws is completely indefensible and the cost to the Government politically will be huge. If the Government wants these laws they should be everywhere, or nowhere.
- e) My city embarrasses me – I cringe at the likely reaction of an international visitor who a little after midnight asks, in a bar in Kings Cross, for a cognac before he or she leaves for bed. They will be told "no" a cognac is defined as a shot and you cannot have shots after midnight unless the bar first mixes it with something (like Coke, soda, etc). OMG it's just unthinkable but it happens every night and we fear the world is laughing at us.
- f) Media-driven law making – after the regrettable deaths of two young men from one-punch attacks during early evenings in Kings Cross there was media pressure for "strong action". We got prompt and strong action but it was ill thought out and misdirected. If two young people died during morning bank robberies would the State Government make some banks (but not others in the next suburb) trade only in the afternoon? Wrong doers need to be apprehended individually and dealt with individually under the law and the police have to be allocated the resources that task requires. Attaching the blame and

punishment to the whole population of the area is simply wrong. When we were in primary school we were told that if someone misbehaves the whole class will stay back on detention – now we are in our 60's we don't expect to be treated in the same way. Violence needs to be handled with a higher police presence and better late night transport options.

- g) Local health care officials claim the laws reduce alcohol related injury – this is true in an absolute sense, but untrue in a relative sense. Professor Gordian Fulde, director of the emergency department at St Vincent's Hospital is quoted as saying that the hospital has seen a 40% drop in injury presentations and a 25% drop in serious injury. Whilst this is a welcome result, we would point out that late night foot traffic in Kings Cross is down 80% so the relative injury rate has dramatically increased. It's proof that the area has become relatively more dangerous, perhaps because of the lower crowd densities.

We don't stop rapists by castrating the male population. We don't stop speeding by closing-off roads. Both of these initiatives however would be extremely effective and applauded by some, but they would cut too heavily into the personal rights and freedom of the vast majority of the law abiding population. Instead police go after the individual concerned and that is what has to happen in the management of alcohol related violence. Please restore freedom to the vast majority of our well behaved, law abiding, community.

Sincerely

Peter and Vivien Pitt

