

Independent Review of Sydney lock-out laws

Garrett Prestage [REDACTED]

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

Dear colleague

I am writing to express my deep dissatisfaction with the handling of the violence issue and the subsequent lock-out laws. I live in Redfern and as a resident of inner Sydney I understand that violence on the streets of Sydney is a problem that needs to be addressed. However, that said, the response of bringing in lock-out laws seems inappropriate. As I understand it, at the time of the introduction of these laws, the rate of violent street assaults was decreasing anyway. Yet, even if such assaults were not decreasing, the number of such assaults does not warrant restricting the rights and movements of the entire population for the sake of a few idiots. Also, again as I understand it, the main incidents that instigated these changes in the law did not arise from alcohol abuse as much as from the use of certain illicit substances, so the idea of restricting access to licensed premises seems misdirected anyway.

By resorting to a policy of restricting the entire inner-Sydney population, rather than trying to control the behaviour of the few idiots that were actually breaking the law and disturbing the peace, the government has effectively shut down the vibrancy of much of inner-Sydney nightlife, closed down many businesses, increased unemployment in specific job categories, and reduced the capacity of certain entertainment professionals to contribute to the life of the city. Also, as a gay man, I am particularly offended by the effect it has had on the gay community. The inner-city precincts subjected to these laws also happen to coincide with the location of many, indeed most, gay community venues. This policy unduly affects the life and vibrancy of the gay community, and yet that community has typically been the victim of the violent behaviour that the government is seeking to address. It is almost like punishing the victim.

I believe that if the government was seriously interested in addressing violence on the streets of inner-Sydney, then the appropriate response would have been to substantially increase the police presence on the streets. In the long-term, the best solution is to address violence and bullying behaviour through the schools system.

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