



Fwd: Review of alcohol restriction zones

GP

Graham Price

To: Liquor Law Review; 



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I'm sure you will have come across Matt Barrie's excellent piece that has since been reprinted across the news sites including here at the Guardian: <http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/feb/05/sydneys-fun-police-have-put-out-the-light-of-the-nightlife-the-citys-a-global-laughing-stock>, so I won't repeat its points.

I will say that the aim of the lockout laws was to reduce alcohol-related violence. The method used to achieve this has been to reduce footfall in those areas where violence was common. Nighttime economy businesses have closed in large numbers to achieve this goal, with resultant loss of jobs which seems counter to the state's "new state of business" motto.

Reducing the nighttime economy of course hasn't solved the problem anyway, it's just moved it somewhere else, although official stats on the matter have been somewhat creatively used to prove a point.

You could reduce car accidents by banning cars, and you could reduce nighttime crime using a curfew to keep all of us in our homes after 7pm, but these are similar blunt and inefficient tools, like the lockout laws. Let's not forget that the King hit punches that triggered this legislation wouldn't have been prevented by it.

This legislation was always news-driven rather than fact-driven. Alcohol related violence had been slowly reducing year on year before the lockouts began, which exposes this legislation as knee-jerk vote winning. Of course many people will be in favour of it. The majority of Sydney's voters don't live or work in the affected areas and/or do not make use of the nighttime economy, but that doesn't mean those people should be ignored.

Sydney used to have a vibrant nightlife, but this is fast going downhill. That's attractive to neither the young people who live here, or the young Australians who would move here from other places, or young people from overseas.

Let's not turn Sydney into a city for old people.

...a city for old people OR casino-goers. Why has the casino been excluded from the lockout zone? The premier has been able to give no credible reasons for excluding what is fast becoming a hotspot of violence from legislation that is ostensibly safety-focused, leaving us to draw our own conclusions - that this government is not just not interested in supporting small business, but in the pocket of big business.

The solution to Sydney's nighttime violence is not to close (some) venues and keep people at home, it is to investigate smarter solutions that tackle Sydney's alcohol problem. That includes smarter pricing on alcohol, education campaigns, smarter policing. There are many world cities that have a vibrant and safe nightlife, and there's no reason Sydney shouldn't be one of them.

Thanks,
Graham Price