'Sad Sydney'

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

We moved to Sydney 2 and a half years ago, for the vibrancy Sydney was famous for. We immediately immersed ourselves in Summer festivals, exploring cbd bars and live music venues, and the night life of both the cbd and Kings Cross. We thought we'd achieved our purpose of living in an 'International city'. Then the tragedies of two thoughtless acts of violence occurred and within months the night life was constrained by the lock out laws which abruptly stopped us dancing at 3am. And over the past 12 months we've watched our regular venues close down. We've seen the city a 'ghost town' after dark. We've also experienced on more than one occasion the aggression displayed by Bouncers at venues to remove people (for no apparent reason) in the lead up to 3am and we no longer feel safe at music gigs, due to over-crowding as what few venues are available, over-crowd the venue because their window for revenue is now limited. And taxis are fewer in the city for getting home, as they seem to be seeking their business outside of the cbd these days.

Our friends from overseas have been to visit and after a day seeing the Opera house and harbour, have commented "what is there to do now?". We're not gamblers, rather seek to enjoy good food, wine and music. But with no new bars and restaurants or music venues opening in the cbd (why would anyone start a new hospitality business in the cbd with the amount of restrictions they're faced with?), we're limited for choice. The city feels dead from 8pm on a Friday night, when it once had a vibrant and happy vibe. And being regular music gig attendees we've noticed a significant reduction in offerings. We're in our early 40s, IT contractors working and earning a good disposable income, with very little to spend it on - again, we don't gamble. We just want to enjoy music, dance, and feel safe.

It seems the lockout laws have increased, rather than decreased the threat of violence and intoxication on the streets in Sydney. I don't feel safe on the streets at 3am having been shunted abruptly out of a nightclub by aggressive bouncers (who I can only assume are afraid of breaching the 3am curfew for fear of fines), amongst hundreds of intoxicated people who've been binge drinking to make the most of their 'window', and there are too few taxis to get us home (because they've taken their business elsewhere).

So a month ago we spent a 3 day weekend in Melbourne. We had a blow-out dancing until 5am. We felt safe, and people were friendly. And it was easy to get a train to where we were staying in the suburbs. We now tell our overseas friends who want to visit to meet us in Melbourne. And we are considering moving there. Sydney's reputation for being an international city with a vibrant, and safe, night life has diminished considerably, to the extent that we are hearing about it from friends both across Australia, and internationally.

Surely there is a compromise solution where safety, and music and dance, can co-exist? I also wonder how much Sydney's tourism economy must be suffering - surely the Opera house and harbour and casinos are not all the council are banking on for tourist dollars?   It's very sad for Sydney, and I sincerely hope a well-reasoned alternative can be arrived at to restore the vibrance Sydney and it's residents, and visitors, once enjoyed.

Kind regards,
Denise

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