

Drinkers license

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

Once you strip away all the arguments the problem with these lock outs is that it is a blanket solution that doesn't address the real issues, and unfairly effects the majority of people and businesses who are acting responsibly. This is a way to start addressing the actual issues of individual responsibility

Drinkers License

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Anyone who has taken more than a casual interest in the Sydney music scene over the past decade and a bit would know the name Matt Rule. With his brother Dan, he owned and operated the iconic Annandale Hotel for many years, helping to make it one of the great live music venues in the country.

As a former hotelier and someone still very active in the Sydney live music and pub scene, Rule has offered a response to New South Wales Premier Barry O'Farrell's [recent decision to implement strict lockout laws](#) in an attempt to curb alcohol related violence. He believes the government's reaction is not hasty, but their decision is the wrong one. So he has contributed his own.

I've been thinking about a response to the situation which has arisen with the government's new lockdown laws and I think a different approach needs to be looked at. I firmly believe the path the O'Farrell government has decided to take is completely wrong. I don't believe it is a kneejerk reaction as people have said, because this issue has been ongoing for quite some time now, but what it does show, yet again, is the inability of our political leaders to actually come up with an original idea that could somewhat help, or point us in the right direction to solving the actual issues involved here.

So to start the conversation I'm gonna throw up an original idea here; I would like to see a licence - very similar to that of a driver's licence - introduced for drinkers. It is time for individuals to become responsible for their actions, and I believe it would be the most effective way of achieving this.

I think the time has come for us a community to recognise that drinking isn't our God given right, but a privilege we need to respect and earn. Currently, the second you turn 18, you are allowed consume whatever form of alcohol you want; you've never really been trained how to drink it, you've never passed an exam pointing out what the community expects from you or what the repercussions are if things go wrong, but yet somehow at 18-years-old you are miraculously an expert drinker. If you related the same scenario to turning 16 and grabbing the keys to a car and just driving off, people would call you crazy!

The benefits of the licence would be far reaching and positive for the community as a whole.

1. It would give governments and health officials a chance to get to drinking age teens with the messages they want, through the form of an exam. It would give them the opportunity to tell them what acceptable behaviour is, what the relevant laws are and, from a health perspective, what the consequences are to you physically and potential consequences to others are if you happen to get in to a fight.
2. It would help put the responsibility back on the individual. If a person breaks the law, or the standards expected - that are clearly set out in the exam - are breached, you can lose the privilege of holding a licence. It would work on a very similar system to the points system of a driver's licence. If an offence is serious enough or you have multiple offences, you can lose the privilege of having a drinker's licence. If you are found consuming alcohol, purchasing alcohol or being in a licensed premises whilst suspended there would again be very serious consequences.

3. It could potentially help introduce young people to a healthier drinking culture; i.e. 18 -21 year-olds couldn't consume certain types of alcohol or would have only a couple of points on their licence which would be motivation to not do the wrong thing and lose the privilege of drinking.
4. It would assist police and licensed operators in identifying those that cause trouble, and would give the police a vehicle to keep known trouble makers out of licensed premises.
5. The revenue raised would be enormous. Let's say 80 percent of the seven million people in New South Wales would require a drinker's licence and it cost \$50 a year. If my maths is right that's \$280 million per year that could be put to effective education campaigns and into the health care system.
6. It could help stop these ridiculous blanket banning measures which lazy governments love to throw out which affect mostly innocent people, as the individual would now become the responsible party.
7. Ideally it could stop government from using issues such as alcohol fuelled violence as money grabbing measures to raise taxes on alcohol, which ultimately punishes every drinker.

These are just seven points which I've thought of now, but if you sit down and put the drinker's license into a range of different scenarios, it's very hard to argue with.

Sure people won't like the idea of forking out for a licence, but I believe the measure being taken by the government, police and the conservatives now, are only just the start. They are determined to turn this into a nanny state and ideas like this would actually be a step in the right direction of taking that power away from them.

Matt Rule

Director of Stuff

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