

Fwd: Submission

TM Ticket Commander MJ [REDACTED]

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To: Liquor Law Review; 

Sun 3/04

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Subject: Submission

liquorlawreview@justice.nsw.gov.au

To the Hon. Justice Callinan AC QC

I refer to the Independent review of the impact of the liquor law reforms contained in the Liquor Amendment Act 2014 passed by NSW Parliament on 30 January 2014. These reforms were implemented to tackle alcohol-related violence and included the imposition of 1.30am lock out and 3am cessation of liquor sales requirements on venues in the Sydney CBD Entertainment and Kings Cross Precincts. These reforms have been in effect since 24 February 2014.

I am writing as a concerned citizen of Sydney – concerned as to both the approach and the effect of these laws on the districts to which they apply – and to the communities they have most affected – small businesses and musicians. I am also concerned from the perspective of the current approach of the Government in addressing alcohol-fuelled violence, and the impacts that it has on personal freedom, personal responsibility and the cultural reputation of Sydney as an international destination.

I submit my qualifications to provide my opinion are relevant as I feel many of the supporters of the “Lock Out Laws” are concerned citizens from a distance. In other words many are residents of Sydney that would never be directly affected by these laws. On the other hand although I am 53 years old I still attend music related events as and when I can – including international acts, local performances, festivals (if there are interesting people playing), DJ sets and the like. My partner has been in and around the music business and I have many friends who are DJs, band members and otherwise part of the artistic and entertainment community of Sydney. I have also spent a fair amount of time in the Kings Cross and CBD attending events throughout my life. I also have a 25 year old daughter who is in the more affected demographic of these laws.

Of course I no longer spend anywhere near the amount of time at night in either of these areas due to the impacts of the liquor law reforms. I have never been a frequenter of the casino and can see no reason to change this now – even though it has become often the sole choice in the precinct at certain times.

I firmly believe these liquor law reforms were ill-conceived by the Government and hastily imposed without a proper evidence based enquiry or thought for the consequences in response to the very public and hysterical Daily Telegraph campaign following the extremely tragic deaths of Daniel Christie and Thomas Kelly. The reforms bear no direct connection to these events which prompted them in terms of approach. While it is a self-fulfilling prophecy that introducing laws that reduce foot traffic in an area will lead to less incidences, the heart of the issue is left untouched – which is why people like those that perpetrated these crimes believe that any sort of violence is acceptable in a modern society. The approach of the Government addressed the hysteria but not the problem.

The outcome is that legitimate businesses have been wiped out, participants in the hitherto vibrant culture in the local out area have been punished and the city of Sydney has taken a reputational hit both internationally and domestically. All of the work done by venues in these areas to improve safety and fun was invalidated – the message is clear – the Government does not accept that the adults of Sydney are deserving of any trust whatsoever. Moreover the overwhelming majority need to pay for what is a tiny minority of people looking to do the wrong thing.

The statistics prior to the reforms all clearly showed violent incidents in decline. In fact given the sharp reduction of foot traffic the accompanying reduction in alcohol related admissions to the emergency department seems to lend substance to the thought that the underlying behaviours are not addressed by this approach.

In a city such as Sydney we have to be able to deal with both the good and bad things that come with it. This doesn't mean we have to tolerate violence. It does mean we have to find solutions to a problem that is tolerant of everyone's interests that it affects. It also needs to recognise that there is a diversity in this city which underpins its very fabric. We have to accept this diversity of lifestyle – it is not acceptable to ask why people 'want' to be out and about at 4am in the morning just because you don't – it is not acceptable to say that just because you don't want to purchase alcohol from a bottle shop after 10pm at night that this means no one else should. There are many reasons both related to employment and lifestyle that lie behind decisions such as these – the fact that people derive enjoyment from different things isn't a bad thing – it's a great thing. There is a tendency of society to condemn the things that seem unappealing on a personal level. We have to recognise that people have different needs, different desires and up till now this city has done a pretty good job at accommodating the melange of diversity that it harbours.

Where does this approach stop? As there is no evidence based connection between the cause and response there is no basis on which to base the next adjustment or response. Until now. Finally concerned citizens such as myself are speaking up to say that there must be another way to address the violence issue than the current approach.

The impacts on this city and its people seem to far outweigh the gains made under this approach. There is no balance here. Please reconsider and roll back these reforms which are regressive and anything but reforming of the behaviours they seek to target.

Regards

Mary-Jane Salier