

My contribution to the review of the liquor law reforms

Christopher Sharp [REDACTED]

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

Dear Ian Callinan

I would like to add to what I hope is a chorus of moderate, law abiding, hard working Sydney-siders who are dismayed at the deterioration of this city's cultural vibrancy in the wake of the State Government's liquor law reforms.

It was never intended to be the target of the reforms, which were so hastily enacted that little foresight was given to what their broader impact might be, but the knock-on effect of imposing these restrictions on a very specific part of our city - one that has traditionally been the most culturally vibrant - has been that it has killed off swathes of small businesses and limited the range of options available for people who want to engage in the city's night-time culture.

The government should have been strategising ways to encourage more small bars and a diverse range of night-time venues within their "lockout zone". The Ivy and The Star are renowned for their high levels of violence, which seems to correlate with the fact that these are large venues. A smarter vision would have been to encourage dispersion by creating a climate where more small venues could open and operate, instead of killing foot traffic and thereby killing wine bars, restaurants, take away restaurants and other unrelated businesses along with it.

Why should our city's culture and night-life, and everyone who enjoys it responsibly, undergo a blanket punishment in order to target a small, violent sub-set of our population? Our national 'alcohol related violence' issue is not solved by making it harder for a night-time economy to exist.

It is not a direct result of the ability for a venue to be open at a certain hour, or a person's ability to buy alcohol between 10pm and midnight from a bottleshop that causes violence. It is a more intrinsic, deep-rooted problem within our society. Partners of men who drink and/or gamble, and then become violent are not going to be safer if people can't get a drink late at night in Kings Cross or the city. The one-punch victims who inspired these reforms were not punched after midnight. Violent thugs aren't directly affected by these restrictions, because their violent impulses have not been addressed by these reforms - but the rest of us who love our city have been affected.

A braver government would admit they got it wrong and redesign their flawed, although well-meant liquor reforms. Which is what I hope your findings will inspire.

We all want a safe city. But we don't want a city zapped of its vibrancy. There are workable solutions being put forward by Keep Sydney Open and I defer to them for those.

I am in my mid-30s, I work full time and rarely find myself looking for places to kick-on after 1am, but my formative years were spent soaking up a night-time culture that is slowly dwindling in 2016. The generation below me does not deserve to have their culture compressed by the generation older than mine, who are more concerned with property value than intergenerational coexistence.

I would also like to voice my objection to the 10pm closure of bottle shops. It was a rule brought about by lobbyists from the major supermarket chains, who have been the major winners in the lock-out laws.

Thank you for taking the time to read my thoughts on this. I look forward to reading your findings.

Christopher Sharp

