

Liquor Law Review - industry input & feedback



Joel Siviour

To: Liquor Law Review;



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I am a booking agent for bands and DJs at a company called Select Music. Last year Select Music celebrated their 10th year as a booking agency. In addition to this, I am a Sydney resident and a peaceful participant of its once vibrant nightlife, I am grateful for the opportunity to make this submission. I am writing to you because I have personally experienced the impacts that the lockout laws have had on our city – I have seen businesses close, witnessed the loss of jobs, lamented the lack of places to socialise with my friends and mourned the dwindling opportunities to listen to live, local music.

Since the introduction of the lock-out laws, it has steadily been getting harder to book talent into Sydney due to a decline in venues, gentrification of entertainment options (eg, very few niche clubs/venues) and tighter budgets from venues due to decline in patronage. I also personally feel that there is less new talent coming out of Sydney lately, or perhaps it's just that the emerging new talent is unable to get booked for shows to get a start due to the points mentioned earlier.

We all agree that safe streets are a priority, but there are better ways to achieve this. Evidence and common sense suggests that a better planned response could have a greater effect on reducing alcohol-related violence *without* having the unintended consequences that the lockout laws have had.

What happened?

Sydney's night-time economy had an awkward start to life. It grew up and out too quickly and without being properly planned for. Before we knew it, tens of thousands of people were coming into a few precincts every Friday and Saturday night, and yet instead of being managed on the scale this required, Kings Cross was left to its own devices. The police were not willing or able to deal with the belligerent or violently inclined. The venues were packed and the streets were chaotic. When it all got too much or you decided it was time to go home, the busses and trains had stopped and the fight for a cab was a long one.

Then, tragically, two young men lost their lives. The city mourned and rightly decided things had to change. The government's response, however, chose to deflect the blame and rushed through blanket laws without consultation. The lockout laws have been a failure.

What needs to change?

The lock-out laws have caused irreparable damage to the economic, social and cultural fabric of Sydney. Instead of the 1:30am lockout and 3.00am cease of service, the following are some potential other alternatives that have been suggested by Keep Sydney Open and Stoney Roads. I support the following ideas wholeheartedly.

- Developing best-practice policing strategies

- Investing in 24/7 public transport (Melbourne did it, and it worked!)
- Implementing integrated urban planning reform
- Encouraging diversification of after-dark activities
- Establishing anti-violence education & intervention campaigns. These programs could focus on teaching young males how to express themselves with words not violent actions and break down this hyper-masculine idea of what it means to be male in this society. It could also touch on short, mid and long term effects of alcohols and drugs.
- Incentivising well-run venues
- Appointing a Night Mayor
- More CCTV across Sydney city
- Stronger lighting in busy areas
- A structured communication line between venues and police
- Street entertainers to lift the mood of non-venue dwellers
- Stricter guidelines for alcohol advertising through mainstream media (TV, Outdoor)
- Salvation Army recovery stations for intoxicated patrons
- Public toilets
- Re-instate the \$200 daily limit to problem gambling Smart Cards (which Mike Baird changed to \$5000 a day in July 2015)
- A drinking points system. Much like a driving license, everyone has a clean slate then they are docked demerit points when they are involved in trouble making and eventually (if they continue) banned from alcohol consumption for a certain amount of time. Weeds out the dickheads!

It is completely achievable that we can have a booming late night economy, without jeopardizing the safety of punters. I urge you to reconsider these laws.

I can be reached for further comment on the details below.

Best,
Joel

Joel Siviour
Select Music Agency Pty Ltd

