

Dear Lockout Review,

I'm going to try and keep my submission as short and simple as possible, as I imagine there will be a lot of them to get through, even though I actually have a lot to say. I imagine many of the submissions will talk about the damage done, the jobs lost, businesses closed, livelihoods destroyed and communities affected, so instead I'd like to pose a question, and offer some solutions.

I have earned most of my living from Sydney's night time economy for the better part of 30 years as a DJ, musician and event producer. The current lockout laws have severely hampered my ability to earn a living, effectively cutting my income in half.

I believe the laws are unfair, ill conceived and fail to address the actual problem, which is Australia's culture of violence. All they have done is stop people going out, and with the drop in assaults corresponding to a much higher drop in foot traffic, the odds of encountering violence on these empty streets are in fact proportionally higher for anyone who wants to or has to venture out at night.

The laws were brought in as an hysterical over-reaction, without proper stakeholder consultation, in response to a tragic loss of life that wouldn't have been prevented by these laws anyway. What we need to do is address the culture of violence in this country. Nothing else will change what is happening, unless of course you just keep everyone in their homes at all times.

My question is, what initiatives were tried to curb the violence before these laws were brought in? Have we tried a huge anti-violence education campaign, more community integrated policing on the streets in entertainment precincts, actually arresting trouble makers instead of moving them on, collaborating more with venues, 24 hour public transport, installing more CCTV cameras and ID scanners in venues? Shall I go on? How about zero tolerance for violent acts and handing down severe punishments for violent offenders? The latest perpetrator of violence in the news got a good behaviour bond... seriously? James Packer can brawl on the street and nothing happens. In fact, the government magically allows his venue an exemption from the laws!

We can do much better than this. It is possible for people who want to enter a venue after 1.30am to do so without hurting anyone, and for those people to be safe on the streets on the way there and on the way home.

These laws unjustly punish everyone, like a school teacher holding everyone back in class because some joker flew a paper aeroplane in the room, instead of addressing the real problem. The government and the police have failed us in their jobs to keep us safe on the streets while maintaining the freedom to buy a bottle of wine after 10pm if we wish. We are adults, should be treated as such, and we should be able to enjoy both of those freedoms. The laws also have the added effect of making us look to the rest of the world like a super violent city whose citizens can't be trusted, and I expect there's already been a major tarnishing of Sydney's hard earned international reputation with a corresponding drop in visitor numbers.

Please reconsider these laws and take on the admittedly difficult task of facing Australia's culture of violence and try to fix that instead. It will be better for everyone in the long run.

Yours sincerely

Phil Smart