



1 APR 2016

March 31, 2016

Mail Room
Castlereagh St
Trade and Investment

To the Callinan Review

I am writing as a long-time resident of Potts Point/Kings Cross to support the retention of the lockout laws. I have lived at the above address – mid-way between Bayswater Road and the El Alamein fountain and between Porky's and Showgirls - since 1988 and so have witnessed from ground zero the upheavals that have occurred since about 2005.

I enclose a copy of a submission I wrote to Sydney City Council in 2008 opposing the 7am to 5am operating hours of the hotel opposite Wintergarden which presents a fair picture of the situation in Darlinghurst Road in the process of becoming totally out of control eight years ago.

The drastic changes coincided with the departure of two major banks, Westpac and the Commonwealth, to smaller premises in Macleay Street. What do you do with big defunct bank buildings? Answer: turn them into big pubs.

The enclosed letter serves as a reminder that the council had encouraged residents to oppose an earlier appeal by the developer to the Land and Environment Court. This, I think, must have been one of the last occasions when the council and residents joined forces against an appeal to the LEC. When this area was under South Sydney Council, it had been common practice for the council to ask residents to back its decisions at appeal hearings but this died out following its forced merger with Sydney City Council in 2004.

Indeed, since the street descended into bedlam with the proliferation of licensed premises combined with late-night trading, residents cannot recall a single instance of Sydney City Council using its power to challenge the LEC whose rulings were doing so much damage to the neighbourhood.

LEC Commissioner Robert Hussey, who is quoted in the enclosed objection, got the ball rolling when he set a trial period of 5am closing in 2005 for a new hotel, the Sugarmill, on the site of the former Westpac, on the corner of Darlinghurst Road and Springfield Mall (aka Piazza Diablo).

This 5am ruling was then used as a precedent for Madam deBiers (formerly the Commonwealth Bank) diagonally opposite Wintergarden. Madam deBiers is, I believe, now known as Sin Citi (spelling?).

Since the lockout laws came into effect, there has been a dramatic decline in the volume of the mobs that used to surge through the street. The council, I understand, at one stage put the numbers on Friday and Saturday nights at 20,000 to 25,000 between midnight and 3am as the road and footpaths seethed with action.

It presented an intimidating, not to mention deafening, spectacle – ready-made for a debauched Fellini-esque film minus the glamour . . . drunken, often really young, girls sprawled in gutters, yelling blokes lurching around in packs looking for trouble, drinking on the go, breaking off now and then to vomit in doorways. *La Dolce Vita* Sydney-style.

For residents, it was like living in enemy-occupied territory. Gazing down in disbelief from double-glazed windows, there was no question of venturing out. Sleep was not a goer either.

In recent months as the anti-lockout campaign has swung into action, there has been much publicity about the decline in the numbers of what is termed 'pedestrian traffic'. Statistics indicating a fall-off of something like 52 per cent are touted as representing some kind of socio-economic disaster without mentioning that whatever the figures are now, mercifully they are way down from more than 20,000.

Since the lockouts, sanity has made a comeback. It definitely feels safer out on the street since the numbers have dropped and the noise is almost back to pre-2006 levels.

Other people, including the police, will provide figures on closures of premises and reduced violent incidents. According to the hotel lobbyists, it seems all closures can be blamed on the lockouts. but there are reportedly far fewer than all the noisy publicity would suggest and some venues, unable to adapt to changing circumstances, were facing their natural expiry date anyway.

Many residents will also presumably make the obvious point that before the lockouts the area had begun a long-overdue regeneration with many new restaurants and businesses catering for newcomers. Claims that we now live in a ghost town and that the lockouts are an attack on so-called culture, personal freedom, even Sydney's reputation can only be regarded as ludicrous.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dimity Torbett". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dimity Torbett