

Liquor law Review

AT Ane Trajkovska [REDACTED]

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To: Liquor Law Review; 

Mon 11:57 PM

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TO THE POWERS THAT BE THE REVIEWERS OF THE LIQUOR LAWS,

We do hope that you will consider the valid and coherent arguments against the liquor laws (even the non coherent on likely coming from a place of frustration and anger and those who speak from the heart). Sadly I can see why the government perhaps felt the need to introduce such laws but they have merely been a bandaid solution and rather oppressive one on a first world, Western and democratic society such as Sydney. A city that is fast becoming a ghost town ruled by the fun-police and its citizens made to feel like they're doing something wrong for simply wanting to enjoy social nights out.

I am 33 years of age, I enjoy a night on the town, I am deeply passionate about live music, I enjoy a few social drinks and certainly know my limits. In all the years of frequenting Sydney clubs and bars since I turned 18, I have never felt the desire to get violent with another human. This, I imagine, is how the majority of decent members of society also feel. It's the small minority of uneducated fools who lack social skills and empathy and feel the urge to carry on and ruin it for the rest of the city. Surely you can see the flawed mentality here of punishing an entire city for the sake of some bottom-feeders?

Education is key. As the generations progress, discipline and education is lacking at a young age. Children very rarely hear the word 'no' from their parents and so they turn into brats who later grow up to be adult brats. I can only imagine this is how these things happen but I wouldn't know for sure, I was raised to respect my fellow peers and members of society.

I am sure you have heard the same arguments over and over again and we can only hope that somebody is paying attention and listening. Listening and reading and not glazing over.

I can only give you my personal experience of the hospitality industry and I could go into great detail but the gist is this. Back in 2008-2009, I worked as the Personal Assistant to the CEO of a hospitality company owning 2 pubs in Kings Cross, 1 club/bar on Oxford St and one pub in the suburbs. We were law abiding citizens, part of a brand that was genuinely passionate about hospitality and its people.

During the Barry O'Farrell government, the talk of lock outs had already commenced and not long after, were applied to a select group of venues based on linking data by BOCSAR that was highly flawed and by no means a true indication of 'alcohol related violence'. This catch phrase has been as widely used as Bush's 'weapon of mass destruction' and where did that get us? A gimmick to steer an agenda.

As a hotel group, we were proactive in voluntarily introducing plastic cups after midnight, no shots and pre-mixes after midnight, a red and yellow card system that was a bit of a novelty but helped warn patrons to adjust their behaviour upon receiving a yellow card and were escorted from the premises upon receiving a red card should it be called for.

We had sufficient proof from Freedom of Information reports to suggest the linking data used at the time was inaccurate though sadly this fell on deaf ears. Near one of our hotels based in Kings Cross, we had a residential building across the road whereby we'd be witness to domestic violence which we would report. This report was then linked back to the hotel. How does this make any sense? The venue should not be punished for doing the right thing and reporting the violence. This will only deter people from helping their fellow humans if they're going to be punished. This is how we got ourselves into this mess in the first place; a lack of respect and care for one another driven by greed and selfishness. But that's just my opinion.

Fast forward several months and 3 of our 4 hotels were inflicted with a 2am lock out alongside a long list of other conditions. Consequently we lost a great deal of revenue (this was a fair while back and so some of the specifics have left my memory), we were appointed Receivers and then made redundant. This included the CEO himself. A man who'd spent 20 odd years dedicated to Sydney's hospitality industry. My boss lost his job, his cars, his home, filed for bankruptcy, moved his wife and 3 young children into his father's home, pulled his children out of private school education, put strain on his relationship with his wife and the list goes on. It might be an easy solution for those in their comfy offices to make but the repercussions are lengthy and painful for everyone affected down the food chain. And that's just one story. There are similar stories of the dozens of other staff members who also lost their jobs, me included. Remember this was also during the GFC and so finding a new job wasn't an easy feat. I was fortunate to gain assistance from my family otherwise it could very easily have been me on the streets or my boss for that matter.

Recently countless of similar stories have emerged from business owners having to shut shop after years of service and being a part of the city's community and it's not just pubs and clubs but small take away shops that rely on late night trade. If you're going to stop serving alcohol at 3am and indirectly force punters to leave venues because they can no longer drink, where are they meant to eat, sober up and get a cab from? 3am is mayhem with taxi drivers often refusing trips and trains not operating.

As a female needing to get home, I have never felt more unsafe on the streets of Sydney than as I do these days. Whether it be early in the night or early in the morning, I am always looking over my shoulder because there aren't enough people around to rely to make you feel safe while you navigate your way around. This fear plays upon my personal anxiety struggles and so we have these lock out laws now affecting my mental health. Never stopped to consider that, did you? Everyone has a story and for a lot of women, it's a fear of not feeling safe to get around because of poor foot traffic and poor transport options.

How is it cities all around the globe who do not have such things as RSA laws and RSA marshalls overseeing levels of intoxication can still function as a responsible society? Yet here we are being told we should be home by a certain hour because respectable and responsible adults should not be out in the early hours of the morning enjoying a drink or two and having a laugh, a dance and a chat with mates and making new mates. We're made to feel that by enjoying these things we are derelicts and should be locked up at home. I would not have the circle of friends I do today as a 33 year old if it wasn't for those early morning sessions as a 22 year old.

And let's discuss the casino. How is this venue that is located in the city exempt from the lock outs? It was exempt back in 2009 when we lost our livelihoods and it's exempt now, but all the while remains one of the most violent venues in Sydney! I have not stepped foot into that place in years because it's seedy, full of undesirables, security guards are rough and quite frankly I have zero interest in attending any entertainment night they have to offer. There is nothing more irresponsible than allowing a casino to cater to young, impressionable kids. If an 18 year old isn't able to go to a bar/ club/ pub to have a drink, enjoy some music and explore the early years of adulthood with friends then they surely should not be encouraged to visit the casino, have a drink or 5, gamble and start a downward road to misery. These are people's lives we are talking about. Kids' lives. If we are so concerned with the safety of our society and our drinking culture then the casino should also be made to face the consequences of the lock outs. Let's not turn a blind eye as to what is happening here and where the priorities lie.

The deaths of those boys have been most unfortunate and sad, but a lock out with such dire consequences across the industry and city is not the answer. The offenders should receive more than a slap on the wrist and the law should focus on punishment of the offender to serve as a warning to others. How will we address the coward punches thrown during broad daylight? Let's use our common sense and take a page from Melbourne's book to create a hub whereby people feel like a community and feel safe enough to enjoy a night out regardless of how they choose to spend it and get themselves home safe.

Thank you for your time in reading this and I have good faith that if this is truly an independent review without bias, then common sense will prevail.

Kind regards,
Ane Trajkovska