

Independent review of the impact of liquor law reforms submission

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We all have our own perspectives of going out pre-lockouts - working behind a bar, playing tunes, living the good times on the dance floor or that late night chat over a beer at 5am before you head home. As a new cadet reporter in 2013 I got my latest one - being stone cold sober in Kings Cross in the early hours of the morning waiting around for something to happen. Kings Cross was the only place in Sydney you could go to without fail at any time or day and find some action.

On the graveyard shift which started at 10pm and ended at 6am we would drive around Sydney from the western suburbs to wherever the night's crime or disaster took us, but when nothing was happening we pulled up in the Cross. Whether it was 1am or 4am out the car window there was entertainment, be it the beautiful women or the homeless guy a few metres away from them, the group of mates from out of town on their first visit or group of starry-eyed 18 years olds, legions of backpackers, club regulars, pimps, prostitutes, thugs, lads, bikies, bouncers, drug dealers, homeless people and general weirdos who would pass by. I literally spent hundreds of nights watching this procession without a drop of alcohol in my system, if just at least passing by it in the car, and while there were idiots, rarely did I see violence.

What I also didn't see much of were police on the streets, Kings Cross had to be one of the most bizarrely reactive policed areas I saw. For a place which swelled with thousands of people on the weekend, and at the very least on a weeknight was busy compared to anywhere else in the city, police were hardly seen on the streets. But if one of their officers was assaulted half the station would come running from the building. That pretty much summed up the policing there.

Kieran Loveridge came in to smash skulls, not to enjoy a night out. How was he allowed to run around and punch five unsuspecting people? That was the most obvious question for me and unfortunately I knew the answer - because he could. Being just a few streets, it's pretty hard to imagine how Kings Cross could not be kept under control. A group of officers on every corner is a simple solution that would have stopped Loveridge fatally punching Thomas Kelly and most other acts of stupidity. Any person who had seen the place first hand could see this - it was never that bad.

Instead, the lockouts and last drinks laws were brought in playing on a perception of violence as the norm rather than the exception which filled suburban middle-class people's heads with images of anarchy needing to be crushed by a draconian measure. It wasn't the reality and now the area has gone so far the opposite way from it's once colourful character that we need to give Kings Cross and the city a shock to the chest to let it's heart beat again. Thankfully, Asian immigrants in the city have kept its late night pulse but unfortunately for Kings Cross it is dead.

The last drives I made through there recently late at night before I finished my work showed a truly different place from when I started out. There were more For Sale signs than smiling faces, the streets were depressingly empty. Pathetically McDonald's was the busiest place on the main drag of Sydney's main nightlife district at 3am, what an embarrassment to tourists and any self-respecting adult I thought. Driving back down Oxford Street from the Cross it was the same story, the familiar sight of a gay couple having a late night drink walking home arm in arm was gone not to mention anyone else. Now these places just had the odd ice freak roaming around which unsettled me, try being a woman with not even a bouncer in sight. But hey the taxi driver will save you, because he has no business.

As i get older my late nights out are becoming less and less, I don't ask for them every weekend, and in 10 or 20 years I imagine they will be down to be able to be counted on one hand each year. But on those few times life circumstances allow me to have a big night of fun with old friends then I want to be able to do it. Why is this not able

3/21/2016

Independent review of the impact of liquor law reforms ... - Liquor Law Review

to be understood? To agree with these laws you have to have lived a life without a single one of these great late nights wandering the city from place to place otherwise I don't understand how you can deprive them from others.