

Dear Mr Callinan

I am sure that you will be receiving hundreds of submissions to your review of the NSW lockout laws arguing the cases of both sides. I don't want to go over the strengths and weaknesses of various arguments, but rather urge you to include in your considerations something that seems to have been missed in much of the media discussion.

I refer to the part of our diverse culture that relates to people who wish to dance the night away. It's not to everyone's tastes, but we are supposedly a free, liberal and tolerant country and there is a significant minority who enjoy dancing and partying all night. It's not about getting drunk and rowdy, but the sale of alcohol has traditionally been the way this activity is made financially viable – not just here but around the western world.

Curtailing alcohol sales at 3am effectively means that dancing until the sun comes up has been made illegal – as venues will generally not stay open for long if they have to shut the bar. This is a rite of passage for many, and something that others want to carry on enjoying into middle age (if maybe less frequently!). Cutting nights short also means that international DJs whose reputation is built on playing marathon sets of six or seven hours have no opportunities in NSW and their fans have to travel interstate or even overseas to enjoy them. (As an aside, cutting Sydney out of this circuit makes it financially harder for Melbourne and other capital cities to put on nights like this.)

Maybe a return to the previous law is not going to happen, although the statistics (as opposed to the media storm) showed that alcohol-related violence in Sydney was already in long-term decline. But I would hope that a new system of regulation might permit proper exemptions for music-related events, whether live performance, or DJs of sufficient international reputation or equivalent merit. I realise that this will inevitably be hard to define in precise legal terms, but if an effective exemption has been granted to the casinos, whose owners make significant political donations to ensure they are looked upon favourably, I think it's vital that the needs of the wider night-time economy are not ignored, otherwise accusations of corruption are incontestable.

I'd like to wish you luck in steering a sensible course between the various sides of this argument and urge you not to forget that the overwhelming majority of people who wish to spend the night out are responsible and non-violent and they are undeserving of punishment. The blanket ban is akin to banning all motoring on holiday weekends because there is an upswing in the incidence of fatal motoring accidents at these times.

Yours sincerely

Edmund Paton Walsh

