

resident's response to City of Sydney submission

Jenifer Wells [REDACTED]

Thu 7/04/2016 10:33 PM

To: Liquor Law Review <liquorlawreview@justice.nsw.gov.au>;

Dear Hon Ian Callinan AC

I appreciate that this submission is outside the formal timeframe for the independent review into the NSW 'Lock-out Laws' but I hope that your review will take my letter into account. It is only a few days late and it is also in response to receiving a summary of the City of Sydney's submission sent to residents and received by me today.

While I appreciate the sentiment of the Lord Mayor in relation to creating a balance between polarised views, and sympathise with businesses and staff who have suffered as a result of the laws, I do not agree with the proposals contained in the City of Sydney's submission.

I have lived in the Kings Cross area for 16 years and generally have had no difficulties with anti-social behaviour for most of them. I have witnessed major changes in the area during this time. One of the most noticeable was a change from a largely 'tourist strip', with hotels and tour buses and plenty of 'two dollar shops', to residential apartments and nightclubs (many new) aimed at a much younger generation than the previous venues catering to the overseas tourist dollars.

I used to walk through Darlinghurst Street on the way home after a dinner or movie and weave my way through busloads of sober, slow walking, overseas tourists checking out 'the strip' while other buses dropped off full loads to favourite restaurants a little further down the road.

As the hotels were slowly converted into apartments, the tourist trade noticeably fell, and in response, many nightclubs started appealing to the more permanent Sydney based, younger generation. Late at night I was now faced with extremely drunk young people, many of questionable looking legal drinking age, smashing into me, falling over, becoming violent and being sick.

While long term residents had little complaints in the past (and we knew what was here when we moved in) the move towards more residential apartments was not compatible with the corresponding change in nightlife clientele and resulting behaviour.

While some of the City's proposals are admirable, eg a type of 'no-tolerance' for violence in venues and no ongoing liquor licences, they only address the issues of violence within venues. They do not address the issues of:

- Violence in the streets not associated with any particular venue
- Anti-social behaviour in the back streets
- Young people pre-loading in residential streets (noise, intimidation, smoking to all hours of the night)
- The attraction of vehicles, often playing loud music, looking for parking (which does not exist) in the back streets throughout the entire night - try sleep through 'duff duff music', blasting horns, screeching tyres, shouting, fights for car parks, fights for fighting's sake, drunken screaming matches throughout the night
- An all night slow car circuit through Woolloomooloo, Potts Point, Elizabeth Bay and the Cross with blaring horns, screeching tyres and 'pranks' on residents by pushing their intercoms while the traffic was

backed up.

The problem is not confined to the venues nor the concentration of them in Kings Cross. It affects residents around the vicinity, which, as you know, now has the most highly concentrated population in Australia.

Since the lock out laws have been in place, the area has changed dramatically. There is some limited noise on a Friday and Saturday night but it dies down very quickly before midnight and the place is largely peaceful for the rest of the night/morning. Residents are no longer confronted with groups of 12 – 20 youths downing drinks in their residential streets (which can be intimidating along with the noise etc). Our building is rarely urinated upon. There is very little traffic looking for non-existent parking in our streets.

I understand the concerns of some venues that have supposedly closed as a result and sympathise with staff. However, over the years I have chatted with many bouncers and employees who complain that those who want to enter the premises late in the night (eg 2-3 am) don't buy drinks anyway because they have pre-loaded or consumed alcohol at cheaper venues.

I agree with the attempted mix of non-alcohol venues and small bars to break up some of the concentration in the Cross. The reality is that the anti-social behaviour does not emanate from patrons who wish to frequent these venues. Nor do people who engage in such behaviour wish to frequent these venues and thereby assist them economically.

While I am a strong believer in civil liberties and small government, there are instances where the civil liberties of the majority (here the permanent residents) warrant intervention, especially where it has been demonstrated to dramatically improve the quality of enjoyment of our neighbourhood. Personally, I would like to be able to buy a bottle of wine at 10.30 at night to take home after a movie or dinner but am prepared to give up that convenience for the greater benefit if it means it stops people pre-loading in my street (I don't think the two are necessarily connected because the alcohol is bought from cheaper places but I'm prepared to concede that 'liberty').

I cannot comment on the change in the City itself, but note that it has a vastly different profile to the Kings Cross present, being made up largely of commercial towers with a small number of residential apartments spread out across the city. I believe the large venues that have had issues with anti-social behaviour in the past are also spread about and not concentrated into a small area.

I therefore submit that the lock out laws have been a major success in the Kings Cross precinct, which still enjoys a vibrant night life without the anti-social behaviour and with a dramatic improvement in noise levels in both traffic and drunken patrons throughout the whole night.

Please do not change what has been a major success for many reasons.

Yours sincerely

Jenifer Wells

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.