

The sacrifice of night time culture

JW

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May 1 first pose an exemplum to illustrate the flawed nature of the lockout laws in its current formation:

'In response to two high profile night time fatal car crashes, due to some particularly negligent drivers, reactionary legislation is brought in to curfew all private night time driving between the hours of 1.30am and 5am, citizens will simply have to change their habits and amend their lives as this solution represents greater safety for all. Of course, there is an immediate drop in night time crashes due to negligent driving or not, as there are no longer any cars on the road. During that time the initial drop in crash statistics are seen as a success. Late night trade reliant on night time driving will slowly but surely shut down. A portion of the city's economy has effectively been sacrificed.'

Although the above hypothetical is rather simplistic, it illustrates the misguided approach in targeting the whole population in order to curb the anti-social behaviour of a few.

I abhor all violence, particularly violence which is unprovoked, and would like nothing more than for us to find ways to stamp out senseless violence all together. I believe the recent liquor law reforms have been fallacious in this regard. The fact that some men feel it is necessary to resort to senseless unprovoked violence is a social issue, not a licensing issue. Targeting all licensed venues in the state in response to this encroaches on our civil right to expect to be civil when enjoying a late night drink or show. I believe we can come up with better targeted legislation to address the scourge of violence when coupled with alcohol.

Furthermore, with the reform in its current incarnation, I take great exception to the fact that a venue which aims to promote and encourage new artistic talent, which adds to the cultural life of the city, is treated the same way as a venue which has a history of violence and serves to only serve alcohol and gambling. The ONLY thing the type of venues described above have in common is the fact that they happen to serve alcohol, but in completely different contexts. Culturally, it is not possible to separate music and dancing from alcohol (unless we aim to become a moral church state), but it should be noted that the service of alcohol in venues which engage in music and cultural events fundamentally provides the income for such endeavours. Curbing hours of trade, therefore undoubtedly reduces the amount of support which can be put towards cultural events. Does the state government intend to provide subsidy or compensation for the loss of night time culture in our city by shutting down that part of our economy?

And if the state's only exceptions at the moment, the Star City and soon to be Barangaroo casino, should suffice to provide the entire city with its night time culture, then the state is completely out of touch.

As a creative professional who has worked with various night economy cultural businesses from small bars like GoodGod Small Club (which has closed) as well as large venues including the Sydney Opera House, I have experienced first hand, and through the experience of my peers, the effect the recent liquor law reforms have had on the scope of late night culture in our city of Sydney.

Many musical and artistic endeavours, take place better at night and at times deep into the night, live music, especially emerging electronic music, immersive installations and experiences which are to be experienced throughout the night, or just a chance for like minded to meet and exchange ideas at all hours.

I met my wife at a bar at Taylor's Square at 2:30am which served as a meeting place for creative types after they had finished work, or after they had been to a show or concert. We are now nearly 10 years together and have a son together. We continue to inspire each other and work together to add to the cultural diversity of this city. I have made countless other friends during those hours whom I have then gone on to work with. My wife and I may have never met and many opportunities may have never come about under the current liquor law reforms.

Late night trade offers opportunities and potential. It would be detrimental to our city to forgo all that potential. It would unseat Sydney's place as a world class city amongst the likes of Berlin, New York, Tokyo, Seoul et al. Many of my international guests and friends have already condemned our city for its approach to the late night economy. It's embarrassing.

sincerely,

Jeremy Wolf
Technician/Designer