

## Submission to Senate Economics Committee | Personal Choices Inquiry

### Section b) Alcohol

#### Alcohol legislation and the Lock out Laws.

I believe I have a comprehensive insight into the matter as my 10 year career in the hospitality industry began in the Kings Cross area and has led me to the small bar industry where I currently operate two venues in Redfern. During this time I have also worked in the hospitality industry in Europe where I was able to experience a different attitude towards liquor and entertainment, namely one in which personal responsibility plays a central role.

My comments on the matter cannot be restricted to lockout laws as they span a larger experience of the industry, and furthermore, I no longer operate in a lock out zone. But any comment on the lockouts needs to be viewed in relation to liquor licensing in greater Sydney, which the laws failed to address and as a result, have ultimately been a failure. A legitimate and considered approach to the problem of alcohol related violence would have been the decentralisation of late night liquor consumption by the derestriction of licensing laws in local centres. Much of the problem stems from a paradoxical association between the 'City of Villages' as Sydney claims to be, and its late night entertainment fiefdoms.

Destroying the economy of Kings Cross has only concentrated the issue elsewhere, while significantly weakening Sydney's fabric as a legitimate international city. It did nothing to tackle the problem's root causes of binge drinking and social violence which can only be resolved through a long term approach in successfully incorporating alcohol into society and allowing people to take responsibility for their own actions and safety. With all due respect to those affected by alcohol related violence, the root causes are largely problems of a juvenile drinking culture that is being held in check by laws that do not allow it to mature.

It would have taken brave and astute leadership indeed, to have taken a stand against pressure groups and the media by offering a real and lasting solution that *had to include* giving responsibility back to people and giving them a chance to choose when and where they associate at night. Instead, in a reaction typical of a tendency to police rather than govern, the O'Farrell government gave the problem an order to move on.

Liquor licensing in Sydney needs to allow patrons to enjoy their night out without the need of being funneled into the entertainment precincts late at night, where divergent crowds are forced into association by one common factor; the sale of liquor.

The adult drinking population in Sydney is capable of conducting itself responsibly, and they deserve better than to be told at 11:30 on a Saturday night that they will need to move to another suburb in order to finish their evening. While most patrons would be happy to head home by 1am from the venue where they began their evening, where they are drawn by a common interest that includes location, demographic, style, music, etc, where their alcohol consumption is known to staff and other patrons, they are forced to invest in travelling to high density areas where

they need to establish themselves once again. It is this process that leads to later nights out, frustrated patrons and chance encounters with people who's sole purpose is to seek trouble.

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