

Evaluation of Sydney CBD Plan of Management.

Submission from Darlinghurst Resident Action Group Submission to NSW Treasury
Evaluation of Sydney CBD Plan of Management, 21 March 2016.

Kings Cross / Darlinghurst district is one of the densest residential areas in Australia. From 2007 resident groups (DRAG and 2011 IRA) have consistently spoken out about the impact of alcohol de-regulation from 2007.

From our perspective, yes, the measures are success for safety and a victory for residents. The Premier's modest restrictions to reduce trading hours (by 2 hours) have been so stunningly successful that it is easy to forget what it was like here in the 2 years ago before these measures. The industry funded Hysteria is obscuring the success.

Residents pleaded for a halt to the explosion of late-opening pubs and licensed clubs and restaurants since 2007 when Clover Moore's City of Sydney Council implemented its Late-Night Trading Development Control Plan.

This designated 3 "**entertainment precincts**" (KX, CBD and Oxford Streets).

There was an explosion of licenced venues in the KX Local Area Police Command — 300 venues and 19 bottle shops trading after midnight by 2013.

This cumulative impact degraded public safety and amenity. The city became was a disgrace due to binge drinking, night-time violence and general bedlam, particularly at weekends. Venues bused in intoxicated patrons when other council areas closed. It was not safe to walk down the main street (Darlinghurst Rd) after midnight. After midnight the area was "body locked". Public bus services could not access Bayswater Road and were re-routed. Each morning would begin by removing alcohol bottles and cleaning urine and excrement from the front door step. Daytime businesses closed as rents were hiked up.

It took a tragedy, the murder of 18-year-old Thomas Kelly and then Daniel Christie, to shame Sydney into a proper debate about the reality of Kings Cross and the CBD.

A remarkable ABC documentary Documentary **DEAD DRUNK** follow four groups of partygoers on a night out in Kings Cross across 12 hours on a Saturday night in April 2014.

#DeadDrunk aired on 1 April 2015 put it plainly, “why on earth would anyone want to go to Kings Cross?” Binge drinking had a tragic social and health impact on young people.

Reform

Internationally most CBDs restrict alcohol consumption and trading hours at 2pm.

The Newcastle Local Area Command saw a reduction of 30% in alcohol related assaults. (BOCSAR evaluation covered the period April 2004 to March 2009. (See: CBJ November 2009.) Figures continued to Fall to 50% reduction. Safer conditions have seen an increase of nighttime activity in Newcastle. Manly voluntary agreement to Restrict Entry to existing venues at 1.30am was a success.

From 24 February 2014 there has been a freeze on new liquor licences and approvals for existing licences across the Sydney CBD Entertainment Precinct and continuation of the existing freeze in the Kings Cross Precinct; plus a ban on takeaway alcohol sales after 10pm across NSW.

The impact of the January 2014 liquor licence reforms on assaults in NSW:

The Bureau of Statistics (BOSCAR) found that the reforms were associated with an immediate and substantial reduction in assault in Kings Cross (down 32%) and a less immediate but substantial and perhaps ongoing reduction in assault in the Sydney CBD (down 40%).

Most areas adjacent to the Kings Cross or Sydney CBD entertainment precincts or within easy reach of these precincts showed no increase in assault. The number of assaults around The Star casino increased but the change was not statistically significant.

Veteran alcohol policy analyst, Ross Fitzgerald writes (SMH, 21 March 2016), “this modest 2 hour reduction in availability has reduced assaults in KX by 40% and in Sydney’s CBD by 20%.” At <http://www.smh.com.au/comment/why-all-sydneysiders-should-be-grateful-for-the-lockout-20160319-gnm9ts.html>

Public Health benefits: St Vincents Hospital Emergency Dept (serving KX and the CBD) has analysed figures for facial / jaw fracture show pre-lockouts 145 patients; 2 years after lockouts 58 patients. (Dr Anthony Grabs, SBS TV "The Loop".) We need more analysis of the Impact of hours of take away sales to 10pm across NSW.

Ongoing Problems

Ongoing implementation problems continue at Council level. 'precinct creep' into surrounding high-density and residential suburbs; failure to regulate On-Premises (so called "restaurants" that are really bars); the impact on 'high streets' linking LNT precincts are becoming LNT precincts (Crown, Victoria St, Darlinghurst Road Darlinghurst). There is an ongoing issue with a failure to Monitor noise impacts and compliance under the so-called "trial" rewards system.

Benefits

Associate Professor Peter Miller demonstrated that early pub closing times work for Kings Cross and Central Sydney and they will for Queensland too. Since the new measures there are many positive impacts — on retail employment in existing business and on social and civic well being. Since 24 February 2014, over 71 new businesses have opened in just the KX proscribed area along. There is increased foot traffic.

We have "lost" about 7 liquor outlets (two sold for re-development (Soho Pub and Goldfish Bar in the Crest) and the nightclubs Hugos, Tunnel and Bada Bing. (One was already on the market prior to February 2014; two were for compliance and RSA failure.) Liquor barns mostly employ young backpackers who are easily re-employed in small bars.

The creative industries have been seen to become increasingly important to economic well-being, proponents suggesting that "human creativity is the ultimate economic resource." (Florida 2002.) These encompass a range of economic activities that are concerned with the generation or exploitation of knowledge and information.

END

They agree that this may encompass advertising, architecture, art, crafts, design, fashion, film, music, performing arts, publishing, R&D, software, TV and radio. Some consider that the education industry is forming a part of creative industry. Others add in consultancies.

Since 24 February 2014 there has been a marked increase in Creative Sector employment. William Street and on Oxford Street (101-111 and 113-115 William Street, Darlinghurst) have been transformed into a mix of commercial and subsidised spaces for cultural and creative enterprises. Currently there are no vacancies.

Costs of Subsidising the Alcohol Industry

Consider this upsurge of activity and vitality in Sydney with the cost to local government and the state of subsidising the multinational alcohol industry. It costs the State about 3.6 Billion on mopping up after alcohol — police, ambulance, hospital Emergency Departments, court cases, rehab, social work, lost employment from injury etc. In Kings Cross we also had the Riot Squad in attendance on weekends. Add in subsidies to transport as well as the ongoing harms of alcohol abuse (cancer, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) and domestic violence figures). And this is a massive public subsidy.

See: <http://www.nofasd.org.au/resources/what-is-fasd-1> and <http://theconversation.com/alcohols-link-to-domestic-violence-is-in-focus-now-what-37696>

DRAG suggests

All existing life and cost saving conditions be retained including 10 pm closure of regional bottleshops; They all be extended to cover all of NSW including Casinos; there is a Moratorium on all additional extended alcohol service applications including council DAs and liquor license type applications.