Lock out laws and other alcohol restrictions: impacts on public health and other outcomes
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Acknowledgements

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A brief history

Trading hours restrictions have a long history in Australia
A brief history

6 o’clock closing was relatively popular – a Victorian referendum to extend pub hours to 10pm was defeated in 1956
A brief history

All states extended pub trading to at least 10pm by the 1960s

Gradual expansion of the night-time economy through the 1970s and 80s

- Initially clubs and venues were attached to hotels
- Cabaret and nightclub licences slowly introduced in most states
- First provision for 24 hour trading in the mid-1970s in some jurisdictions, but uncommon until the 1990s/2000s
Lockouts

Increases in harms around late night premises in some jurisdictions led to various attempts to introduce restrictions

- Precinct-focussed interventions around RSA, security practices, safe taxi-ranks etc
- Lockouts pioneered in small Victorian cities throughout the 1990s
- Implemented briefly in Queensland in the early 2000s
- Trialled in Melbourne in 2008
Lock-outs ≠ trading hours
Lock-outs - evaluations

Very few high quality evaluations of lock-outs on their own

- Mazzerole et al. (2012) evaluation of lockouts in two Queensland entertainment precincts – reductions in violence inside venues, but not outside (small overall effect)
- Follow-up analysis by De Andrade et al. (2016) – no overall effect in police or ambulance data
- Miller et al. (2012) evaluation of Bendigo lockout in regional Victoria – no impact on violence
- Limited use of control sites, evidence quality is generally low
Three recent interventions

Combining lock-outs with mandated ‘last drinks’

Newcastle (2008)

Sydney (2014)

Queensland (2016)
Newcastle
Newcastle

In 2008, the Liquor Administration Board in NSW imposed mandatory conditions on all late-trading venues in the city of Newcastle

- No alcohol served after 3am, lockouts from 1am
- Prompted by a coordinated campaign from community members and police about violence
- Very unusual decision for LAB (potentially related to their organisational status)
- Immediately and forcefully challenged by the industry
  - Challenge was settled with a shift to 1:30/3:30
Newcastle
Newcastle - evaluations


Newcastle - evaluations

Immediate and sustained reduction in night-time assault

• 32% reduction in first evaluation, sustained (33% over five years)

• No change in assaults in the neighbouring precinct of Hamilton
  • No increases from displacement effects between 2008 and 2010
  • No decreases after 1am lock-out (but no last drinks) implemented in Hamilton in 2010

• Less well designed analyses of emergency department data showed ~8% reduction in weekend, night-time injury presentations

Miller, P. et al. (2014), Changes in injury-related hospital emergency department presentations associated with the imposition of regulatory versus voluntary licensing conditions on licensed venues in two cities. Drug Alcohol Rev, 33: 314–322)
Next stop: Sydney

Two high profile deaths in Kings Cross

• Thomas Kelly in July 2012
• Daniel Christy on New Years Eve 2013
• Unprovoked, one-punch attacks on teenagers

Massive media coverage

• Both daily Sydney papers ran major campaigns, Safer Sydney (Sydney Morning Herald) and Enough (Daily Telegraph)
Next stop: Sydney
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Sydney

‘Newcastle solution’ implemented in Central Sydney and Kings Cross

- 1:30am lock-outs, 3:00am last drinks
- Bans on shots after midnight, changes to transport and security

Plus

- 10pm closing for bottleshops state-wide
- Mandatory sentences for ‘coward punch’ deaths

Hugely positive reaction from most media organisations
The intervention site
Evaluations (1)

8 months after implementation

- 32% decline in monthly assaults in KX, 26% decline in CBD
- No significant displacement to either neighbouring or distal entertainment precincts in Sydney (although suggestive evidence of small increase in Pyrmont)
- Adjusted for existing declining trend in assaults

Evaluations (2)

17 months after implementation

- 45% decline in monthly assaults in KX, 22% decline in CBD
- No significant displacement to either neighbouring or distal entertainment precincts
- Declines in Kings Cross occurred across the whole night, in the CBD just after 3am

Evaluations (3)

29 months after implementation

- 49% decline in assaults in KX, 13% decline in CBD, partly offset by increases in displacement areas (~15%)
- Overall, 930 assaults prevented in intervention areas, 299 more in non-intervention areas (total effect -631, ~22 per month)

Evaluations (3)

Displacement effects supported by qualitative research

“There are less drunk people on the street that’s for certain. And the less drunk people on the street means that everybody is slightly better behaved and those that are drunk look odd and they’re less likely to behave badly”.
(FG2:P5 – male Kings Cross resident/patron)

“It’s just a different vibe. Newtown has previously been very diverse, welcoming, felt safe walking down the street and it’s that bit of aggression and destructive behaviour that wasn’t part of it ... there wasn’t this vibe of walking around looking to smash bottles.” (FG4:P8 – male Newtown resident)

Emergency presentations

- Simple pre vs post design, focusing on very serious injuries (triage categories 1 and 2)
- Presentations fell from 318 to 246, with declines particularly marked after 1am on the weekends
- Some increases between 11pm and 1am

Public health implications

The interventions have clearly reduced violence and injuries in Kings Cross and the CBD

- Major declines in late-night assaults, particularly in Kings Cross
- Some evidence of temporal and spatial displacement
- ~22 assaults and ~6 serious injuries prevented each month
- Unpublished analyses of ambulance data in the CBD find ~50% declines in weekend, late-night severe and critical injuries and ~30% decline in less serious injuries
Other impacts

Major public debate about the impacts of the restrictions on Sydney’s nightlife and culture

- High profile venue closures
- Viral article published on LinkedIn (‘Would the last person in Sydney please turn the lights out?’)
- Well organised campaign harnessing community and industry opposition – ‘Keep Sydney Open’
- Particular emphasis
  - Impact on live music and DJs
  - Exemption for casino
Other impacts
Other impacts

Hard to find robust analyses of these broader impacts

- Overall decline of ~20% in night-time foot-traffic in Kings Cross (~80% decline at 4am), smaller declines in CBD
- Survey of CBD licenced premises found late traders had seen declines in turnover and employment of ~20%
- Australian Performing Rights Association (APRA) data showed declines in live music venues and admissions (offset by increases in unaffected areas)
- Clear contribution to the ongoing gentrification of Kings Cross
Other impacts

Venue closures

• Restrictions clearly resulted in some major venues closing down

• Counts of late night licences in Kings Cross and CBD show that new venues have entered the market, but potentially different styles/markets

• A number of closures attributed to the restrictions were clearly caused primarily by other factors
Iconic Kings Cross venue Hugo’s to close its doors

The failures in Bayswater Rd in particular have taken place over the past few years, not just the past 17 months after the lockup laws were introduced.

The famous Bayswater Brasserie closed in 2013, replaced by the short-lived Janus which lasted just a few months. The Piano Room, with its ties with Kings Cross kingpin John Ibrahim, closed after a few year. It became Santa Barbara, operated by Drink N Dine duo Jamie Wirth and James Miller, who tragically died of an accidental overdose soon after its opening in 2013.

Then there was the sprawling Mansions pub which is now an apartment complex.

Hugos neighbour Concrete Blonde, with its $2.5 million fitout, went bust in 2013 after soft sales.

Lockout laws: Hugo’s Lounge set to reopen in King’s Cross to bring party life back into the

“I think the lockout laws has actually done good job of clearing out some of the trash in the area and I think it actually has a much nicer atmosphere compared to what it used to be like,” Jury said.

“Hopefully this could be the beginning of a new era for this venue and that street in particular. I’m hoping that we can bring the people back and make the area as popular as it once was.”
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Public support

• Polling consistently shows broad public support for the restrictions
• Opposition felt strongly and campaigned on strongly
Other impacts
Review

Major independent review commissioned by the NSW Government (Callinan Review)

• Broadly supported the restrictions, noting that the impacts on businesses and culture were overstated or hard to quantify
• Recommended slight relaxation – lockout pushed back to 2am, last drinks to 3:30am where live entertainment is being provided
• Has taken some of the sting out of the debate (alongside Baird’s resignation)
Finally: Queensland
Finally: Queensland

Last drinks implemented in Queensland from July 2016

• Policy platform of ALP at 2015 election, driven by high profile candidate (and facial surgeon) Anthony Lynham

• Unexpectedly won government and, despite media and industry pressure, stuck to their commitment

• Last drinks at 2am state-wide, 3am in 15 entertainment precincts

• Initially planning to implement 1:00am lock-outs in early 2017, but scrapped this component after fractious public debate (and spillover from Sydney debates)
Queensland

Implementation problematic in Queensland

- Informal evaluation after 6 months found no impact on assault rates
- Venues granted 12 one-off permits to trade later than 3am per year
- Suggestions in major precincts that venues were colluding – no weekends where all venues closed at 3am in first six months
- Permit numbers cut to 6 per year from 2017
Rics Bar
Sponsored -

Rics Bar has a little secret!
Even though the new legislation has kicked in, we're extending our trading hours this Saturday night to 5am.
The partying hasn't quite died in Queensland yet, especially at Rics Bar!
Queensland

Preliminary evaluation - 6 months post-intervention

- No obvious impact on assault rates
Queensland

No obvious impact on injury rates

Queensland

Major evaluation continues

- Long-term assessment of effects (esp with reduction in exemption permits) on a broad range of harms
- Data on changes to the night-time environments in key precincts being collected
- Intercept surveys with large numbers of patrons
- Key stakeholder interviews
Summing up

The last decade has seen a reversal of decades of liberalisation in Australian late-night licensing

- Evaluations of lockouts and especially last drinks restrictions in Newcastle and Sydney show significant and sustained reductions in rates of assault and serious injury
- Some evidence of problems being displaced to other areas in Sydney (but not Newcastle)
- Results consistent with most international literature on changes in late night trading hours for licensed premises (although de-regulation of UK hours in 2003 an exception)
- No other policy options with a similar evidence base
Summing up

Gaps in the evidence/policy landscape

• Focus on late-night, public violence has narrowed debates about alcohol policy
  • e.g. only 15% of alcohol-related injuries in Queensland occurred in or around licensed premises (40% in private homes)

• Existing declines in problem rates in, e.g., Kings Cross, were largely ignored in debates (but decline clearly accelerated by intervention)
Summing up

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• Existing declines in problem rates in, e.g., Kings Cross, were largely ignored in debates (but decline clearly accelerated by intervention)

• Complicated politics may require more consultative processes
  • Restrictions have clearly come at a cost to businesses and some communities. What are the trade-offs?
  • General public supportive, affected communities strongly opposed
  • Some communities feel unfairly targeted (e.g. live music, LGBTI scenes)
  • Public perceptions are that the laws are failing
Summing up

The implementation of restrictions have been driven by diverse factors

- Last gasp of an outgoing regulator (Newcastle)
- Concerted media campaign after high profile deaths (Sydney)
- Political champion in underdog party that won election (Queensland)

What’s next?

- No other Aus jurisdictions seem likely to go down this road in the short term, despite effectiveness of interventions
- Queensland evaluation findings will be the next key phase
- Trade-offs between public health gains and social cost can’t be unpacked by ‘evidence’, but require politics
Thank you

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