

Is the Sydney Lockout Destroying Business?

New lockout laws proved tough enough to stop even Justin Timberlake from attending his own after party, when he arrived at 1:45 am, just fifteen minutes after lockout.

The penalties for owners who don't comply with the law are very heavy, making disobedience risky and not worth the penalty.

Police say that there has been a reduction of alcohol-induced assaults since the lockout laws came in force in Sydney.

The City of Sydney Council, however, says that this may just be the result of less people out partying and revellers finding alternative suburbs.

The Council says that pedestrian traffic in the city has been down by up to 84%.

Don Weatherburn of the Bureau of Justice Statistics says that it is still too early to tell whether the new laws are working.

This is partly due to the number of violent attacks already being in decline before the lockout came in; and assaults generally decreasing in the colder months, then peaking in January.

The laws have seen a transfer of party-goers to areas like the Star City Casino, Newtown and Double Bay.

This has led some people to say that the lockout hasn't solve the problem at all, just moved it from the CBD and Kings Cross to surrounding areas where the law does not operate.

The latest reports from the [Bureau of Crime Statistics and](#)

[Research](#) do not support for the theory that the lockdown laws are working.

The reports show no real change over the previous two years in the incidence of non-domestic assault outdoors or in public places in either Kings Cross or the Sydney CBD.

While the incidence of non-domestic assault on licensed premises declined, Don Weatherburn cautioned against automatically linking this with success.

He said assaults will always fall in winter and rise in spring and summer, and we therefore may not be able to evaluate their effectiveness until early next year.

The fact that there are no concrete links between the laws and reduced crime is frustrating for businesses, many of which have been forced to reduce their trading hours or even had to close their doors altogether.

Before the laws kicked in, owners were anxious that the Sydney lockdown may be destroying business.

The heaviest trade for bars and clubs in Kings Cross is generally between 10pm and 4am.

But with bars and clubs forced to close their doors at 1:30, with last drinks at 3am, the patronage levels and profitability of many businesses has been drastically affected.

Some have labelled the changes as 'death', with the famous golden mile now covered with lease signs 35 shops on the 300 metre strip, according to [Fairfax Media](#).

Businesses have reported losses of up to 40% since the introduction of the new laws.

Small food shops are suffering but even the larger establishments are failing to draw the crowds they once did.

Owner of the Kings Cross nightclub 'the Backroom' was forced to close, citing the lockout laws as the reason that it was no longer viable to continue trading

The Oxford Art Factory has also suffered.

Patrons of that business come to see live music, not to get drunk, according to Mark Gerber who has run the venue for the last seven years.

Gerber believes that the [Sydney lockout is destroying his business](#). He described the lockout as being like 'chemotherapy' that didn't deal with the cancer but instead inflicted harm.

He was also upset that local businesses were not consulted before the measures were put into place.

He [told the ABC](#) that many of his staff have had their working hours cut by about 35%, including security guards.

The loss in profits also means that it is more expensive for bands to perform.

Some NSW politicians have acknowledged the pain of business owners forced to shorten trading hours, let staff go and even shut up shop completely.

But they blame this on the economy rather than the lockout laws.

If the lockouts don't work, then there will almost certainly be greater calls to have them repealed.

This is what occurred in Melbourne when 2am lockout was dumped in 2008 for being ineffective.

I guess we'll just have to wait and see.