

From: edwina@edwinalloyd.com

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Subject: Re: Questions to Ms Lloyd please
To:

Thank you very much for your letter and for taking the time to check out my campaign website.

I'm sorry it has taken me a little while to get back to you. My delay has in part been in order to first see the outcomes of the Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety's preliminary report on the impact of licensing restrictions in Kings Cross and the CBD, so that I could give you a full and informed response.

In regards to your questions:

1) Do you support the current lockouts?

I have lived in the area for several years now, and I share your concerns about crime and anti-social behavior in Kings Cross and surrounding areas. I can assure you that I am an unequivocal supporter of the so-called "lock-out laws" in Kings Cross and the CBD. In fact, I was a supporter of the Last Drinks campaign organized by emergency service workers that led the way in campaigning for government action to address alcohol-fuelled violence.

The O'Farrell Government, with its close tie to the liquor industry, had to be dragged kicking and screaming into the new laws surrounding late night alcohol trading. Personally, I think Labor was also too slow to react to the problems with alcohol-fuelled violence, but I have been delighted with the strong stance taken by John Robertson on this issue.

I am very concerned that the current Member for Sydney has wavered on this issue, and seems to provide different answers depending on whom he is speaking to. At various times Mr Greenwich has argued that "the jury is out" on the effectiveness of the laws, or he has argued that certain nightclubs should be exempt which in other

words would be a return to the old licensing regime.

Mr Greenwich is wrong - the jury is in. These laws have been very effective in reducing alcohol-fuelled violence in Newcastle, and early indications show they are having the same positive effect in Kings Cross and the Sydney CBD. The evidence of local health professionals to the preliminary report of the Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety is particularly telling. For example, the CEO of St Vincents Health, Mr Toby Hall, noted that:

We would like to make it fairly clear first of all that our experience to date is that, since the legislation came into existence six months ago, we have had an observed reduction in the amount of alcohol-related presentations to our emergency department across the board. Probably more importantly, our intensive care specialists, trauma service and emergency staff have observed a reduction in serious injuries at that time as well relating to alcohol-related assaults.

The evidence from St Vincent's Health is consistent with the day-to-day experience of people who live in the area. Certainly, from my perspective as a local resident, the level of street violence seems to have decreased and the streets feel safer.

I believe that the Last Drinks model has worked and similar restrictions on licensed premises should be considered for other communities that are experiencing problems with alcohol-fuelled crime. There may be a need for some tinkering with the details to address some unintended consequences, such as compliance requirements on small businesses, but overall the laws are working well and should be kept in place.

It would be mistake, however, to see these regulations as a panacea for the broader social problems associated with Australia's drinking culture. As I argue on my website, I believe a coordinated response to Australia's collective drinking problem should involve regulation, education and rehabilitation. As a society we have made enormous inroads into tackling the negative consequences of smoking, and I believe it's time we took a similar approach towards our attitudes to drinking.

2) Which "customers" do you refer to? Lager louts?

The Kings Cross area is, without doubt, going through a profound change. Fewer younger people are coming to the area to party, and hence the businesses that revolved around the late night party trade are in decline. I believe this change was already well underway before the introduction of the lock-out laws, but the new laws

may have hastened the process. I also suspect that excessively high rents, especially along the Darlinghurst Road strip, may be contributing to the lack of confidence in the local business community.

Many shop owners that I have spoken to are concerned that authorities at both State and City Council level have failed to recognise the way Kings Cross is changing, and have failed to support local businesses to manage their way through this transition. Traders along Oxford Street are going through a similar experience - finding that more shoppers are being attracted by the shiny lights of Westfield – and have similar concerns.

Nevertheless, I believe that Kings Cross and Oxford Street both have a future as vibrant local trading areas. The customers won't be "lager louts", but will be people attracted to the area's diversity, edginess, and eclectic charm. What's needed is some determination and ingenuity by the local traders, supported by a State Government and a City Council that understands the needs of businesses.

A few years ago the Port Phillip Council in Victoria responded to concerns of local traders in the Clarendon Street shopping precinct of South Melbourne, who concerned that changes to street parking access would destroy their precinct. The Council and Yarra Trams worked together to develop an advertising program encouraging people to shop in south Melbourne and travel by public transport. I believe a similar campaign could be beneficial for Kings Cross and Oxford Street. If elected, I would seek to work with the Sydney City Council, Sydney Trains and Sydney Buses to develop a marketing campaign for Kings Cross and Oxford Street to rebuild consumer and business confidence in the area.

3) What is your plan for the renaissance of Kings Cross as a liveable area?

Kings Cross is one of Sydney's most famous and identifiable landmarks. While I have been supportive of the campaign to address the social damage caused by the late night alcohol trade, I am also supportive of the retaining the area's diverse social mix. Indeed, as a great niece of one of Sydney's "colourful local identities" - Kate Leigh - I feel somewhat sympathetic to the area's unique cultural history!

In short, I believe that Kings Cross can lose the booze without losing its soul. It can keep its diversity and its openness to difference while focusing on food, art and fun.

The small group of cafes and restaurants in Llanckelly Place, for example, are showing

that the transformation of Kings Cross does not have to be feared, and that change can present opportunities for those business which are able to adapt. The reinvention of Lankelly Place as one of Sydney's dining and culture hotspots presents, in my opinion, a good model for the broader renaissance of Kings Cross and Oxford Street.

The Liberal Candidate for seat of Sydney recently stated on her Facebook page that "gentrification will help everybody" in Kings Cross. I firmly disagree with this position, as I am concerned that many long-term locals are being driven out by high rents and the intolerant attitudes of some of their new neighbours. I love living on Kings Cross, and part of the reason that I enjoy living here is the wonderful mix of people in my neighbourhood – from the wealthy apartment dwellers in Potts Point and Elizabeth Bay, to the public housing tenants in [Woolloomooloo](#). I sincerely hope that Kings Cross continues to be a place where everyone can feel at home and can contribute to the richness of our social life.

Thank you again for contacting me regarding these issues. I look forward to discussing them in more detail with the Potts Point and Kings Cross Heritage Conservation Society in the future.

Would you mind if I posted your letter and this response on my website - I can block out your name and identifying email if you prefer.

Yours sincerely,

Edwina Lloyd