

THE WINNER IS SYDNEY...

In an attempt to make Sydney safer, have we extinguished the life and soul of the city? Back in 2000, the winner really was Sydney as the city exploded with the furore of the Olympics. People from all around the world came to celebrate and experience the best in Australia's nightlife.

Over a decade later, the bustling nightlife of the Kings Cross was suddenly extinguished with the rollout of the lockout laws in 2014. The new regulations forced the closure of hundreds of licensed venues and turned the once vibrant inner-city streets of Sydney into a virtual ghost town come sundown.

OR IS IT?

Now, five years on, the damage is done. In a surprise turn of events, Premier Gladys Berejiklian recently announced plans to lift the ban on Sydney's CBD and Oxford Street, in an attempt to rejuvenate the night-time economy. But, in a shock twist, the government made it clear the ban will remain on Kings Cross.

The question we're all asking is *why*? And is it too late for the Cross to take back its crown?

Olympic Fever

In 1993, the phrase "And the winner is... Sydney" became iconic around the nation and locals took to the streets to celebrate in jubilation.

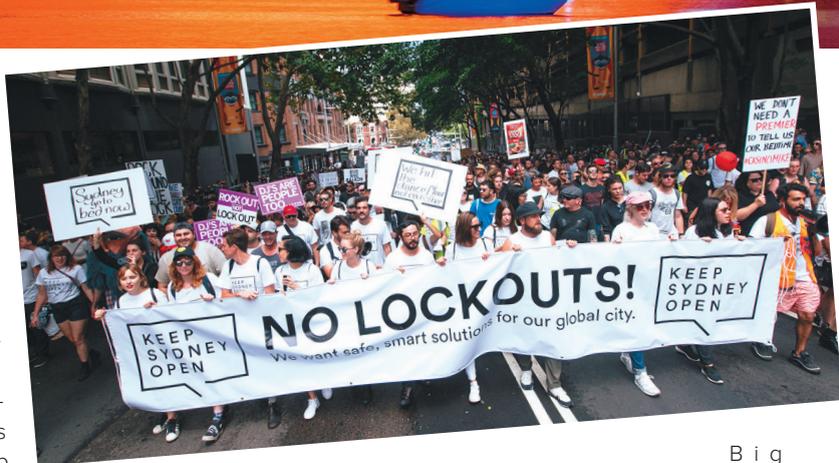
As the year 2000 approached, Olympic fever rose to new heights. Sydney had a thriving and enviable music and party scene across the city, and the red-light district of Kings Cross was a paradise of sex, drugs and rock'n'roll.



Emerging as a global city during the Olympics, Sydney's bars spilled onto the streets. The euphoric vibe saw Olympians, celebrities, tourists and locals rubbing shoulders and soaking up the glamorous and edgy city and the seedy underbelly that was once the Golden Mile.

2014 Lockout Laws

With the introduction of the lockout laws, Sydney's nightlife came to a screeching halt. The lockout laws saw some of Sydney's most iconic nightclubs and bars fold, and the streets became empty after dark.



Big developers caught wind of the prime real estate potential in the Cross. They rolled in and gentrified the area. The place as it once was would undoubtedly never be the same again. Sydney's Golden Age was over.

Kings Cross replaced its historical culture with coffee culture; the riffraff and bohemians, who called this misfit place their home, were slowly squeezed out, taking with them the character of the Cross.

With real-estate prices soaring, empty



shop fronts and struggling businesses tell the true story of the decimation that has taken place.

The Lift

Finally, after years of fighting for the lockout laws to be reversed, it seems the government has listened, with plans to scrap the laws by the end of 2019.

Anti-lockout law lobby group and political party Keep Sydney Open has worked tirelessly over the past five years to have the laws repealed. Campaign Director Tyson Koh said, “We have highlighted the cultural and economic impacts, told the stories of the people affected, conducted research, organised petitions, rallies, and sat in countless meetings. I don’t think anyone expected the lockouts would give way to a protest movement as persistent and sophisticated as KSO, but we’ve been there every step of the way and shaped the conversation leading to this point,” he said. “It’s amazing to finally see a light at the end of the tunnel.”

But many are still wondering what this all means for the excluded Kings Cross. And will it be an impossible feat to breathe life back into Sydney? Tyson Koh doesn’t think so. “Sydney’s nightlife and cultural currency has undeniably

taken a downturn since the lockout, but it’s definitely not past the point of no return,” he said.

“The Sydney of tomorrow won’t be the same place it was 10 years ago, but no city on earth stands still. I’m confident that we will be as vibrant as before,” he said. “How long it will take for people to start engaging with the city and for our confidence to return is anyone’s guess, but we’re talking at least a couple of years.”

The party still has its work cut out for it. “Even with the lockouts gone, the city isn’t magically going to turn into a vital cultural capital, so KSO still has a lot of work to do to address the legislative roadblocks that hold us back,” Tyson said. “For example, the liquor freeze currently in place means it’s essentially illegal to open up a new nightclub or large music venue in the CBD.”

A Brighter Future

The winner will always be Sydney, as we have one of the most beautiful cities in the world. And once the lockout laws are finally abolished once and for all, hopefully the amazing vibe Sydney once had will return.

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