

Item 3.2

More Action to Support Sydney's Nightlife

File No: S051491

Minute by the Lord Mayor

To Council:

On 9 September 2025, the NSW Productivity and Equality Commission ('the Commission') published its report, [Review of regulatory barriers impeding a vibrant 24-hour economy](#) ('the Report').

When he launched the Report, the Minister for the Night-Time Economy (John Graham) observed that for a long time night-time policy had a "moral tinge", was more about "keeping people safe from themselves" and motivated by a belief that "nothing good happens after dark". He said that the NSW Government had "worked hard to rebuild our night-time economy", through its "vibrancy reforms" but there was more work to do "to harness its full potential". The Commission's report and recommendations may inform future tranches of these reforms.

The Report's 55 recommendations are grouped into three broad areas:

- Making it easier to open and run night-time businesses, with recommendations for continued development of Special Entertainment Precincts, proportionate regulation for low-risk development and adapting the planning system for new and evolving business models.
- Getting around and home safely, including recommendations to make public transport at night more predictable, accessible and frequent.
- Understanding and promoting the State's night-time economy with recommendations for better communication with enforcement agencies, Councils and businesses, strengthening public perceptions of nightlife and addressing data gaps to improve decision making.

City of Sydney action

The City has a strong history in identifying issues impacting the night-time economy and in implementing measures to address these which are aligned to the Report's recommendations.

Our 2019 amendments to the Late Night Trading Development Control Plan (DCP) provided a "framework for fun" by establishing new late-night trading areas, enabling low-impact venues to trade later and provided incentives for licenced premises to provide live entertainment. Our 2021 Open and Creative Reforms have enabled shops to trade until 10pm in the city centre and on village high streets without requiring a development application.

We streamlined outdoor dining approvals and since 2020, we have waived outdoor dining application and licensing fees offering support worth \$20 million. We have now made this fee waiver permanent. Almost all businesses with outdoor dining have told us it is beneficial, or crucial, to their business - more than half have had an increase in turnover of around 20%. Many have employed new staff or increased staff hours – an estimated 200 jobs have been created from our free outdoor dining.

Our \$32 million upgrade of Crown Street is creating a more attractive streetscape with more space for outdoor dining and for displaying goods on the footpath. The City has also spent over \$300 million transforming George Street into a pedestrian boulevard, which has attracted \$8 billion of private investment and is now enticing crowds of people sitting and walking, eating and drinking, shopping and chatting with friends.

This year, we made further DCP changes to safeguard live entertainment venues. New residential development near existing venues or 24-hour late-night trading areas are now required to be built to a standard that protects residents from existing noise. Likewise, new or substantially changed venues need to be built to a standard that provides existing residents reasonable amenity.

To further incentivise venues, we have enabled earlier and later trading hours and extended trial periods for longer trading hours to reduce the need for a development application (DA).

Work is now under way to enable our existing late-night trading areas to become Special Entertainment Precincts, unlocking additional benefits for nightlife businesses. This includes additional liquor licence hours and discounted liquor licence fees. It creates opportunities for more areas to benefit from a diverse and vibrant night-time offering, while also providing greater certainty for businesses.

The City is doing this work in line with the NSW Government's Guidelines which requires us to carry out sound studies and develop precinct management plans with a framework around compliance and sound management. As they prepare these plans, staff will consider managing waste, cleansing and anti-social behaviour as well as encouraging a diverse range of night-time activities which are accessible, inclusive and affordable for everyone. The City will prepare a draft Planning Proposal and DCP that will be reported to Council in early 2026.

We have also taken action to improve safety at night and to promote Sydney's nightlife, consistent with the Report's recommendations. The City has introduced initiatives such as the Oxford Street Pride Charter, PrideVis security vests, and late-night safety walks with NSW Police to promote inclusion, safety, and trust with LGBTIQ+ communities. It also coordinates a Pride Care Space during Mardi Gras, providing young people with hydration, nutrition, and support services.

The Report

I have long advocated to State Governments for many of the reforms recommended in the Report, including harmonising liquor licensing and planning approval processes and improvements to late night public transport.

I welcome recommendations to increase the frequency of and access to public transport at night. I strongly suggest the NSW Government trials later services so everyone, including workers can get home safely and affordably when venues close, especially on weekends and in high-activity areas such as Oxford Street and the city centre.

Vehicle speeds are generally higher at night in the City Centre and main streets, yet the Report overlooks measures like 30km/h limits in late-night precincts that could support activation and improve safety.

Many of the Report's recommendations are likely to have significant implications for Councils if adopted including those relating to development approval processes, length of trial periods, heritage uses and zoning changes. It is important that we fully understand these implications, and where necessary the NSW Government engages with Councils before they are adopted.

The Report explicitly acknowledges that many impacts on nightlife and the night-time economy are outside the scope of its review. These include staff shortages, higher costs of operating businesses at night, cost of living, and the competing attraction of staying at home. Nor does it address the need for additional funding to support many of the proposed initiatives which rely on local Councils, precinct-based groups and local businesses supporting and delivering outcomes.

Even so, the Report makes an important contribution to identifying actions to further revitalise our nightlife. In welcoming it, we are committed to continuing to work with the NSW Government, nightlife businesses and the community to ensure that the recommendations are implemented in a way that deliver social, cultural and economic benefits without having adverse or unintended impacts.

Recommendation

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council welcome the NSW Productivity and Equality Commission report, Review of regulatory barriers impeding a vibrant 24-hour economy and commend the Minister for the Night-Time Economy, the Hon. John Graham MLC for commissioning this review;
- (B) Council note that the City of Sydney has implemented measures to make it easier for businesses to trade at night, improve safety at night and promote Sydney's nightlife consistent with many of the Report's recommendations and is currently working to enable our existing late-night trading areas to become Special Entertainment Precincts, unlocking additional benefits for nightlife businesses;
- (C) the Lord Mayor be requested to write to:
 - (i) the Minister for the Night-Time Economy commending him for commissioning the Report and informing him that the City is willing to work with the NSW Government in implementing the Report's recommendations in a way that delivers social and economic benefits without having adverse or unintended impacts;
 - (ii) the Minister for Transport requesting him to implement the Report's recommendations to improve frequency of and access to public transport at night, as well as trialling later public transport services especially on weekends and in high-activity areas;
 - (iii) the Minister for Roads requesting her to consider lowering speed limits to 30km/h in late night precincts to support activation and improve safety; and

- (iv) the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces and the Minister for Gaming and Racing requesting them to proceed with implementing the Report's recommendations relating to harmonising and integrating liquor licensing and development approval processes and offering the City of Sydney as a trial area for that to happen; and
- (D) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to:
 - (i) review the Report's recommendations and provide Council with advice on the implications for local government if the recommendations are adopted; and
 - (ii) liaise with the NSW Productivity and Equality Commission, the Office of the 24 Hour Economy Commissioner and any other relevant NSW Government agencies requesting them to address any issues arising from this review.

THE RT HON CLOVER MOORE AO

Lord Mayor of Sydney