

‘Kicked out’: The lived experiences of Sydney’s nightlife eviction policies

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Introduction: Licensed venues in NSW are required to evict patrons who are intoxicated as per the *Liquor Act 2007* (NSW). However, there is an almost complete lack of specific research on eviction as a regulatory practice. This research investigated the complex relationship between pleasure and harm in nightlife settings and the un/intended outcomes of Sydney’s nightlife eviction policies.

Method: 28 semi-structured, in-depth qualitative interviews were conducted from December 2022 to April 2023 with patrons who were evicted from Sydney nightlife venues while using AOD. Participants ranged in age from 18-41 (median age 24), with 57% identifying as male, and had diverse experiences of substance use, nightlife engagement and eviction. Drawing on actor-network theory, a relational approach was adopted to trace the human and non-human actors that shape how eviction unfolds.

Key Findings: Patrons reported experiencing diverse and distinct harms (physical, psychological, emotional, social, and material) as a direct consequence of eviction practices, including through interactions with security, separation from friends, interruptions to safe travel home, and not feeling safe. Participant experiences highlighted the inconsistencies of eviction practices (across time, venue, staff/security), and the complex intra-actions between material (settings, staff, substances) and immaterial (policies, atmospheres, social norms) assemblages in shaping experiences of pleasure and harm in nightlife.

Conclusions: Eviction policy is deployed unevenly, and inconsistencies in eviction practices are closely related to how patrons experience harm and pleasure when engaging with nightlife. The lived experiences of Sydney’s eviction policies draw attention to the ways in which current policy and practice may increase rather than reduce harms.

Implications for Policy: The findings highlight the need to consider the complex interplay between eviction and wider nightlife, alcohol, and intoxication policies, and the need for an ethos of harm reduction to underpin the way that nightlife venues are regulated to promote safe(r) leisure spaces.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: *BF is supported by an Australian Government Research Training Program stipend and funding from the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre. The National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care under the Drug and Alcohol Program. RS (#1197241) has a NHMRC Investigator Fellowship. These funding bodies did not provide any input into the study design; in the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data; in the writing of the report; or in the decision to submit to APSAD.*