



Music Australia's Submission to the Inquiry into Sydney's Night Time Economy

To: The Hon Natalie Ward MLC
Committee Chair
Joint Select Committee on Sydney's night time economy
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This submission can be published in full on the website including the name.

About Music Australia

Music Australia is Australia's only organisation devoted to Australian musical life in its entirety. We are a 50-member not for profit national Council representing all aspects of music, with activities spanning education, community and the professional industry. We deliver campaigns, information, industry plans, resources, sector networking, community engagement, Australia's largest school music participation program (*Music: Count Us In*), and a national contemporary music Roundtable.

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“The Preatures began in 2008, and we have cut our teeth playing gigs at Camperdown Bowling Club, Drummoyne RSL Memorial and Community Club, Spectrum, Q Bar, Deans, Candys Apartment, Bar Me, The Flinders Hotel, The World Bar, the Gaelic Club Sydney, the Hopetoun Hotel, the Sandringham Hotel, the Lizard Lounge, The Standard, the Hi Fi Bar, Oxford Art Factory, the Lansdowne Hotel, and Club 77. Only two of these places still exist as live music venues. The rest form part of the almost 200 venues that have closed since the lockout zone was introduced in 2014.”

Isabella Manfredi, Musician, Lead Singer and Songwriter of The Preatures, Monday 28 May 2018 testimony, The Music and Arts Economy in NSW, page 21, Portfolio Committee No. 6 – Planning and Environment

Music Australia wishes to identify issues in relation to (c) “ensure existing regulatory arrangements in relation to individuals, businesses and other stakeholders, including Sydney’s lockout laws, remain appropriately balanced”. In short we believe further work is required to optimise this balance. We would like to acknowledge and emphasise issues that were raised in The Music and Arts Economy in NSW Inquiry (Portfolio Committee No. 6, Planning and Environment, 15 November 2018). This inquiry identified a number of negative consequences of the 2014 changes for musicians and the music industry:

1. ***Destroying pathways for artist development:*** a diverse range of differently sized, centrally located venues are needed for artist development. Artists benefit from being able to progressively experience and adjust to larger venues and audiences, which is becoming increasingly difficult. The closure of venues as a direct result of the new regulations has reduced performance opportunities across the board;
2. ***Negative impact on national touring network:*** East Coast touring has been impacted, with the Sydney problems affecting some international East Coast touring plans, and not having viable Sydney dates creates problems from Melbourne and Brisbane bands wishing to tour, potentially affecting Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne audiences;
3. ***Negative impact on Sydney’s cultural reputation:*** The term ‘lockout’ sends an international message that Sydney’s nightlife is closed, locked out, the opposite of exciting international cities such as New York, London, Berlin, or even Melbourne. This negative impact includes Sydney musicians moving to Melbourne and raising concerns in the media about Sydney’s nightlife (Cooper, 2019);
4. ***Failure to recognise that live music is a complex, subcultured, multi-genre ecosystem,*** where perceptions of alcohol fuelled violence were not true of many impacted venues. The new focus on precincts will hopefully provide a way of better risk-adjusting the impact;
5. ***Negative impact on the night time economy, and restriction of options for night time economy workers:*** The value of the night time economy in Sydney is estimated to be over \$27 billion per annum, which makes its health of vital economic importance (Deloitte, 2019). One study indicated that only 46% of respondents were satisfied with Sydney’s night time offering (Committee for Sydney, 2018). It should also be noted that the regulations have

reduced choices and options available for those working in the night time economy, such as musicians, hospitality workers and even police;

6. **Red tape and a growing compliance burden that is strangling entrepreneurialism, growth and consumer choice:** Music Australia has heard complaints from artists, venues and entrepreneurs that the red tape and bureaucracy the NSW government has introduced in relation to live entertainment makes other locations (such as Melbourne) far more attractive environments for entrepreneurs;
7. **Noise restrictions creating logistical problems for musicians that place them at risk of accidents and/or fines:** Venue access issues have arisen due to rear-entry loading docks being unavailable to musicians due to resident noise complaints. Musicians can find themselves bumping out equipment onto main roads, in front of venues, subjecting them to the risk of accidents and fines. We need to better 'operationalise' changes enforced on musicians, so they understand and are provided with a safe and legal way to undertake their work.

Music Australia joins with other organisations such as the Night Time Industries Association, the City of Sydney and The Live Music Office to call for positive change which can address these issues, creating a more vibrant, diverse, inclusive and safe Sydney nightlife. The Committee for Sydney's *Sydney as a 24-Hour City* report should provide useful input into formulating changes. We encourage the NSW State Government to work with industry, and particularly the above three named organisations to make sensible and balanced amendments to current laws. To ensure the perspective of musicians is included, we explicitly include The Live Music Office, and support Recommendations 8, 12 and 13 of the 2018 NSW Parliamentary Inquiry (*The Music and Arts Economy in NSW*) for the NSW government to strengthen support for, and interaction with The Live Music Office.

Music Australia appreciates the opportunity to participate in this process and would be happy to provide further assistance.

References

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