

INQUIRY INTO THE MUSIC AND ARTS ECONOMY IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Jazz Village
Date received: 26 February 2018

While writing this submission in my new role as Co-Founder of Jazz Village, I have been involved in the music industry for decades (dating back to the late '70s) - as a licensed theatrical agent, a band manager, a venue booker and a publicist.

More recently I've established a music marketing agency for artists (perfectpitch.com.au), a music branding agency (bands4brands.com.au), run a monthly live music venue (easternlounge.com.au) and now launched a consultancy and booking agency aimed at revitalising night-time culture and economies at a local level through live entertainment - jazzvillage.com.au

As is evidenced by this brief summary, music has been a long held passion and I'm thrilled to see the NSW Government holding this inquiry, recognising the importance of music and the arts to our culture and wellbeing as a society and hopefully supporting it more in the future.

It seems to me that one of the major issues facing 'the music industry' and the livelihood of musicians in NSW is the lack of venues in which to perform their art. When I was managing a band (way back when), it was possible to play six nights a week in Sydney alone (sometimes twice in one night!). These days bands playing twice a month are considered as 'doing well'.

Conversely, it's still easy to find a variety of great live music in (e.g.) Melbourne and therefore a better environment for musicians to have a chance of 'making a career' from their art. I would love this inquiry to result in a significantly increased investment for the contemporary music sector - notably funding to support the establishment of new venues, money to pay our artists what they deserve, and yes, funding for organisations such as Jazz Village to bring more music to more local 'villages'.

Our office is in Manly on Sydney's Northern Beaches and there are a number of small local bars as well as the bigger hotels that do support musicians... yet apart from weekend nights, most of these close relatively early and only attract small crowds during the week. Licensing then plays a part in the environment created on Friday and Saturday nights, which become more renowned for alcohol-fueled violence than for fun nights out with friends.

I believe the issue here is that the smaller bars all have midnight licenses. Crowds pour out the doors of these venues at 11:55pm and rush straight to the bigger pubs that have 2am or 3am licenses... meaning more people drinking more alcohol and all expelled onto the footpath in the early hours.

If the smaller bars were given 1am licenses, punters would tend to go home at closing time as they'd be too late to be allowed in to the late closing pubs. Problem half-solved!

It's also the aim of Jazz Village to provide a warmer, 'festival feel' during the week, with a range of entertainment both inside and outside venues... so families and friends can wander from one area to the next, experiencing a range of genres and entertainment styles in a safe, secure environment. Not a late night out, but rather a way to break up the week, have a couple of drinks with friends while discovering exciting new talent that may be busking on the footpath or performing on a bigger stage inside a venue... and at the same time, supporting local businesses, whether cafes or clothing retailers who would otherwise shut for lack of custom.

We're speaking with many of our local venue owners, local Council and the local Business Chamber, all of whom are supportive of this concept... but without Government funding or private sponsorship it still comes down to us to pay the bands and individual artists for showcasing their talent to the public. We're willing to source the artists and market the events, but obviously can't do this without a sustainable financial model.

I hope this important Inquiry leads to positive outcomes that really do support the music industry, the musicians themselves and those like us who have made it our mission to support music for all the right reasons. Good luck.