

**Submission
No 367**

INQUIRY INTO THE MUSIC AND ARTS ECONOMY IN NEW SOUTH WALES

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I was for more than a decade the manager of the Loft Youth Arts & Cultural Centre, a service of Newcastle Council. The Loft acted as an incubator hub for emerging bands and musicians. The Loft provided a venue where new and emerging bands could play their first or an early gig in a safe supported drug and alcohol free environment. Over the life of the Loft more than 400 bands and musicians were given a first or early opportunity to play a gig. Band members were tutored in front of house, stage management, event promotion, WHS and managing drug and alcohol free venues. Importantly the Loft was available for hire by emerging youth entrepreneurs who used the facilities of the Loft to organise gigs by local and touring bands. Since the closure of the Loft this incubator role has been undertaken by some private entrepreneurs but bureaucratic logjams mean that these are no longer able to operate. My proposal is that the state government work with local councils to jointly fund local youth music and arts venues that can facilitate young people's engagement with music and the arts and which can play the role that the Loft played in fostering and nurturing young musicians. The loft in effect acted as a sub-regional facility attracting bands and audiences from Lake Macquarie, Port Stephens, Maitland and Cessnock local government areas. That the Loft no longer exists has had a dramatic impact upon the emerging music scene in Newcastle. a jointly funded sub-regional facility would serve to fill this gap.