

INQUIRY INTO THE MUSIC AND ARTS ECONOMY IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Blue Mountains Economic Enterprise

Date received: 28 February 2018

Inquiry into the Music and Arts economy in New South Wales

Terms of Reference:

That Portfolio Committee No.6 – Planning and Environment inquire into and report on the music and arts economy in New South Wales, including regional New South Wales, and in particular:

- a) Progress on the implementation of the Government response to the New South Wales Night-Time Economy Roundtable Action Plan,*
- b) Policies that could support a diverse and vibrant music and arts culture across New South Wales,*
- c) Policies that could support the establishment and sustainability of permanent and temporary venue spaces for music and the arts,*
- d) Policy and legislation in other jurisdictions, and options for New South Wales including red tape reduction and funding options,*
- e) Any other related matter.*

Introduction:

Blue Mountains Economic Enterprise (BMEE) is pleased to provide the following submission in response to the inquiry into factors contributing to the music and arts economy in New South Wales.

The Board of BMEE commends the Portfolio Committee for working strategically to identify factors which will boost the growth of this important industry sector.

Blue Mountains Economic Enterprise (BMEE) is the peak regional economic development organisation for the Blue Mountains. BMEE's mission is to stimulate economic development in the Blue Mountains through advocacy, investment and industry development, consistent with our competitive advantages.

BMEE's vision is to be the recognised economic development organisation for the Blue Mountains, delivering significant and measureable contributions to the economy through:

- Encouraging appropriate investment
- Positioning the City of the Blue Mountains for business
- Strengthening a sustainable and diversified business community

To achieve this vision, the Board has identified four key strategic pillars which are the focus of the organisation's activity.

- Health and wellbeing (including aged-care and disabilities)
- Creative Industries
- Education
- World-Heritage Industry Development (including Tourism, Food and Bushfire Building Innovation)

Creative Industries as a key economic driver for the Blue Mountains

The Creative Industry sector is one of the most dynamic sectors of the Australian and New South Wales economies, encompassing cultural production industries such as the arts, music, libraries and media production, and creative

service industries such as advertising, digital services and design. The New South Wales Government recognises the importance of the Creative Industries sector for the State economy which accounts for 4.7 percent of total employment and 6.8 percent of the state's total services export.

Creative Industries are defined as “those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent, and that have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property”

For the Blue Mountains, the Creative Industry sector forms a vital and substantial part of the economy delivering:

- ✓ 8% of local jobs in the Blue Mountains
- ✓ The third greatest contributor to the Blue Mountains economy.
- ✓ \$592 million to economic output
- ✓ 7.6% of the total working residential population (double state and national averages)

Combined with general industry trends and the recognition of the Blue Mountains as a creative hub, the Creative Industries sector will be an increasingly important and diverse contributor to the Greater Western Sydney economy in the future.

BMEE has acted on the region's strategic advantage as a creative hub by establishing the Blue Mountains Creative Industries Cluster (the Cluster). Evolution of the Cluster has seen the creation and establishment of [MTNS MADE](#), a brand and a campaign which serves as a collaborative platform for promoting the region and its creative excellence.

Music and Arts Industry in the Blue Mountains - the Blue Mountains as a world class live music destination

An unparalleled number of artists live in the Blue Mountains. There is a strong desire to work, perform and exhibit in the Blue Mountains. Many Blue Mountains residents are exporting art to national and international audiences. The city boasts a depth and breadth of skill and experience across a range of disciplines.

The music and arts industry form an important part of the broader Creative Industry sector in the Blue Mountains. The Blue Mountains Music Festival, now in its 23rd year, is an important event in the national music calendar and attracts visitors from all over Australia. Many other events throughout the year contribute to the region's reputation as a vibrant, dynamic cultural hub.

The BMEE Creative Industries Cluster and the creative brand campaign, MTNS MADE, has assisted the progression of the creative sector within the Blue Mountains. The MTNS MADE campaign has supported the production of several art projects and a wide range of other initiatives within the creative community.

Local Government – Backing the cultural competitiveness of the Blue Mountains

- Blue Mountains City Council (BMCC) is a leader in terms of supporting local cultural initiatives and Creative Industries development.
- BMCC responded to Create NSW opportunities by securing funding for, collaborating with local music producer Meg Benson, are producing the 2018 Micro Festival, 'Katoomba Live and Local'. A free, family-friendly micro-festival which aims to 'stimulate local businesses, employ local musicians and gather diverse crowds'.
- BMCC has also supported local arts initiatives through its Cultural Partnerships Program since 2001 and currently its City of the Arts Grants Program, with \$50,000 per annum over the past 18 years, which in previous years was

matched by State Government matching funding as a devolved funding program. State funding is no longer provided.

- To augment local government's commitment, there is an urgent need for funding to support the fit out of arts facilities. The affordability of venues, be they Council-owned venues, or privately owned venues was a common challenge for professional musicians and booking agents throughout the Blue Mountains.

Industry consultation

In order to provide advice in response to the parliamentary inquiry into the music and arts economy in New South Wales (NSW), Trish Doyle MP, held a Blue Mountains Music Roundtable which was attended by 18 industry representatives. Below is a synopsis of key themes identified through the Round table, and additional consultation with music industry representatives by BMEE. It should be noted that the following is a representation of discussion and does not necessarily reflect the views of BMEE.

The majority of stakeholders taking part in the Roundtable consultation indicated strong frustration regarding eligibility for regional grants due to the Blue Mountains not being considered regional.

At a State level, the Blue Mountains is included in Western Sydney, yet it is geographically and demographically vastly different to this area. The Blue Mountains is on the suburban fringe, bridging Western Sydney and regional NSW, and for this reason it is yet to secure adequate funding support dedicated to either. Significantly, as a key tourism destination, the Blue Mountains community and audiences include diverse regional, national and international visitors. There is an increasing demand from domestic and international tourism visitors for quality, authentic cultural tourism experiences. The NSW Government is urged to take a holistic view when considering the Blue Mountains' case for music and arts funding. The infrastructure and programs not only services the local and regional population but a vast and important tourism population also.

Current funding support issues - equity and access

The Blue Mountains arts and creative industries communities share a common concern regarding the city's ability to compete for arts funding made available by the NSW Government.

"Arts and cultural expression are an important part of our daily lives, are part of our identity and reflect our values. Arts and culture contribute to personal and collective wellbeing, as well as contributing strongly to a diverse and robust economy and have considerable value in contributing to social and community outcomes." (DISCUSSION PAPER 'FRAMING THE FUTURE: DEVELOPING AND ARTS AND CULTURAL POLICY FOR NSW', 2013).

A large proportion of the cultural programs, projects, events and festivals undertaken throughout the Blue Mountains are designed to successfully bring tangible, positive and social outcomes across the community.

However, statistics present a disadvantage. The Blue Mountains is ranked in the top 30 of all NSW Local Government Areas for socio-economic advantage. For example, the city is consistently ranked above Penrith and Parramatta. The city has obvious pockets of disadvantage amongst its 27 villages located across the thin ridgeline, but when aggregated results are used to determine a city's eligibility for arts funding, the Blue Mountains is excluded as it is categorised as not officially socially disadvantaged. The Blue Mountains wishes to work with State and Federal Governments to build on the strengths of its communities, in particular its creative sectors.

Additional comments

Although BMCC is collaborating with local music producer Meg Benson, to produce the 2018 Micro Festival, 'Katoomba Live and Local', Blue Mountains business owners fail to understand the value live music contributes to the night time economy. There exists an opportunity for the State Government to provide results of studies to encourage business owners to put live music into their business plans in order to benefit from the flow on effects.

The affordability of venues continues as a challenge for music producers and performers in the Blue Mountains. Industry feedback referred to overheads at council venues and a lack of suitable larger spaces for touring bands as a constraint for the growth of the industry. In addition, the red tape around permitted use of council venues and the difficulty in creating pop-up events or performances due to 'change of use' for particular buildings and locations limit the ability of the arts economy to be nimble, and to provide diverse and dynamic experiences for audiences in the Blue Mountains.

The Blue Mountains has a moderate income population, which is also an ageing population. Audiences and also producers of music and arts events see an opportunity for the Government to boost the night time economy with safe night time public transport for the audiences of the Blue Mountains.

Summary

Due to the unique concentration of arts and cultural activity in the region, and the low level of funding received in recent years, we urge the NSW Government to give consideration to strategic funding initiatives to support the arts and creative industries in the Blue Mountains.

As a Creative Industries hot spot with live music and creative arts driving the creation of local jobs and business development, BMEE looks forward to working with all government stakeholders to position the Blue Mountains competitively for the future.

The Blue Mountains Creative Industries Cluster would be pleased to provide further information and comment to the inquiry into the music and arts economy of NSW if invited.