

# **INQUIRY INTO THE MUSIC AND ARTS ECONOMY IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

**Organisation:** Oxford Art Factory

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The Oxford Art Factory has been a hub of creativity for the last decade. With phenomenal internal staff, working with a range of artists, managers and performers nationally and internationally it has thrived and been victorious in surviving in such a tough climate for culture in Sydney.

The OAF is the premier venue of its size in Sydney that is held in such high regard by those working in the music industry and those participating as punters. However, it has been dramatically affected by the lock out laws over the last four years but remains to provide a diverse live music program with art activations that run past midnight each week.

### **What you do, and why you do it**

Venue Bookings and Marketing for the Oxford Art Factory, in Sydney as of September last year; Previously having experience in the city as a venue booker, label manager and promoter in Sydney.

I love the city and observing the independent scenes and communities that span from Bondi to Marrickville and beyond. Highlighting and showcasing local artists who are up-and-coming or have made their way through to having success in the mainstream is incredibly gratifying.

### **What works, what gives you hope about your local music community**

The lock out laws have cultivated an external scene based on punk and DIY ideals – First time and inexperienced promoters are utilising warehouse and non-conventional event spaces to put on events without restrictions that are in place within the CBD and those viewed with scrutiny within conventional venues external to the lock out zones. This facilitating and sustaining the notion of being out late and partying past midnight as the ordinary, mirroring other cities in Australia and internationally.

Through developing their brands and raising awareness they can grow to using larger spaces like Oxford Art Factory that have the existing infrastructure (sound systems, experienced staff and security teams) to make events safe from a participants perspective and simple to run for the promoter. An example of these promoters who have expanded with success from the warehouses to use of traditional venues would be Motorik, Deeper than House, House of Mince among others.

Oxford Art Factory, being situated on the iconic Oxford Street is home to the LGBTQI+ community and is a safe space for all minorities to enjoy a show or exhibition within the Cube. The venue advocates for inclusion and diversity and has an open door policy for all.

### **What's not working right now / what are the challenges**

Having a lively music and arts culture may not be saved solely with one or a few venues that are trading well or have survived the mass closure of spaces; There needs to be stages for bands of all levels to regularly perform within the city. Venues shutting their doors being the knock on effect of the lock out laws it is difficult for bands to get required performance time and for promoters to put on events without operating spaces. With a limited pool of creators the output is more selective for programming from the venue perspective.

Additionally, having particular groups move from one area to another can disrupt the existing culture. For example, Kings Cross was a late night destination for those between 18 – 25 prior to the lock out - these groups have moved from KX to Newtown and surrounding areas, giving less purposefulness to live music spaces like the now defunct Newtown Social Club, giving preference to boozy pub and nightclub culture.

The lock out has dramatically affected areas like Kings Cross and Oxford Street that were previously highly populated on Friday and Saturday nights. This has created spaces like the OAF to become a destination venue rather than a place that would trade efficiently till late on weekends without draw-card international acts or high cost DJ's. The knock on effect of this limited foot traffic is the shut down of complimentary establishments like cafes, shops and restaurants that would extend the time that people would be visiting the precinct.

### **What issues concern you/ should be addressed**

Primarily, the lock out laws have significantly changed the way that Oxford Art factory operates as a cultural entity and as a financially profitable establishment. It can no longer rely on foot traffic, rather, it needs clever programming and extended and expensive marketing strategies to captivate audiences ahead of time.

The limitations of, reduced financial amount and the lengthily processes surrounding arts and music funding is restricting output as a venue. This gives restriction to necessary upgrades to the physical structure of the building and the extent to the events that are being hosted within.

**How the NSW Government can help – what changes can they introduce to make it easier for you to do what you do**

- Remove lock out timing restrictions and provide suggestions of how to make going out safer for patrons (e.g more street marshals patrolling entertainment precincts, education and advocacy schemes for partying safely and respectfully).
- Reduce restrictions put on bars with regards to drink provision – rather than an across the board ruling have different rules for suited for different spaces.
- Give incentives for use of dormant spaces on Oxford Street for late night trading – (eg. pop up restaurants).
- Government funding amounts and accessibility in line with other states to assist in funding and facilitating arts and music from the venue.
- Funding that would make having All Ages and Under 18's a more commercially viable option for venues and promoters – Having these events are instrumental in introducing the next wave of punters that would be coming to the OAF when they reach the legal age.

**What you're willing and able to do to assist with change**

The Oxford Art Factory will continue to advocate for late night activity in the CBD and greater areas by providing events that span genres and subcultures. 2018 it will expand our late night programming with diverse events that facilitate for a late night culture.