

SYDNEY'S NIGHT TIME ECONOMY

Organisation: Community Broadcasting Association of Australia

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Joint Select Committee on Sydney's Night Time Economy
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Inquiry into Sydney's night time economy

The Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (CBAA) welcomes the Committee's inquiry into the night time economy in Sydney. As the peak body and the national representative organisation for community broadcasting across Australia, we value the opportunity to add our thoughts on enhancing Sydney's night time economy. We believe sustaining a vibrant and world class music and arts industry in Sydney and New South Wales (NSW), in which community broadcasting plays a vital role, is fundamental to enhancing the night time economy in Sydney and across the state.

Community broadcasting is symbiotic with arts and music, with live music venues and art spaces vital to the cultural fabric of Sydney's night time and its neighbourhoods. Sydney's 23 metropolitan and suburban community radio stations provide avenues for local musicians and artists to be broadcast on airwaves across the country, showcasing Sydney's thriving music scenes, and also serving as catalysts for building diverse and passionate music and arts communities. These communities support vibrant scenes and the venues, businesses and employees that host them. Further, community broadcasting provides opportunities for people to positively contribute to Sydney's music and arts culture by being an important conduit for skills, training and employment and through local partnerships.

In this submission we highlight the unique role of community broadcasting within the broader music and arts ecosystem and how it contributes to vibrant communities who themselves make, shape and support Sydney's night time economy. In doing so we hope to stimulate the Committee's deliberations and offer support for the NSW Government from the unique perspective of community broadcasting as it invigorates the music and arts sector across the state.

The unique value of community radio to a vibrant music and arts sector

Community broadcasting is Australia's largest independent media sector and an important public resource for information and cultural engagement. The 2019 National Listener Survey reported the highest listening levels for community radio on record – 5.9 million Australians, or 30% of the population aged 15 years and over tune in to the over 461 not-for-profit, community-owned and operated radio services across the country each week. This is up from approximately 3.8 million in



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2004.¹ In NSW, 29% of the population or 1.8 million people aged 15 years and over tune in to the more than 100 community radio stations each week.²

In the National Listener Survey, amongst the top reasons Australians give for tuning in to community radio are specialist music and Australian music, as well as local news and information shared by local voices and personalities.

Across Australia, no less than 36% of music broadcast on community radio is from Australian artists.³ Recent research indicates that figures this high may not be being achieved by others in the broadcasting sector.⁴

Community radio performs an important role in Australia's radio-scape by supporting local music, local audiences and music industries. Community radio, because of its different business model not only fills gaps that the national broadcasters and commercials cannot, but it actively champions Australian music and contributes to the health and vitality of local music scenes, and the people, venues and business involved in them. This dedication and passion for local music and the local music industry is ingrained in community radio licensing, which stipulates that community radio supports local and diverse news, perspectives, music and culture. Community radio stations are created with inherent value being placed on local and Australian music.⁵

It is a common story that many local artists get their first radio play on community radio, which can be the start of long careers with continued support from community broadcasters. Some examples include:

- The Vines – a Sydney band who received their first airplay on FBi Radio and went on to global success.
- Wolfmother – another Sydney band who were first played on FBi Radio, went on to become one of the world's biggest bands after releasing their debut album.
- Hermitude – a Blue Mountains based duo who submitted demo material to Sydney's 2SER for airplay before recording their first album. They became involved in 2SER's revered 'Freaky Loops' events, known for fostering talent in the Australian hip hop scene. Hermitude went on to have number one albums in Australia and regularly tour the world to huge audiences.
- Dan Sultan – a popular, charting Indigenous performer whose connection to community radio was so strong he became the first CBAA's Australian Music Radio Airplay Project (Amrap) Ambassador in 2014.
- Gotye – as a self-funded, self-recorded artist, Wally De Backer first submitted music to 2SER under the Gotye name in 2002, well before his international success in 2011 with 'Someone That I Used To Know'. His 2002 recording 'Boardface' was subsequently an album of the week on 2SER before the album got wider release through De Backer's first record deal. The only interview De Backer did after he won three Grammy Awards in 2013 was with 2SER.
- The Preatures – a Sydney four-piece who were first played widely on FBi Radio, before going on to win the prestigious \$50,000 Vanda & Young songwriting prize and being nominated for multiple ARIA Awards. The band has also played at South By Southwest and Coachella, and supported the likes of P!nk, Foo Fighters and the Rolling Stones.

¹ Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (2019). *Community Radio National Listener Survey - Summary report of findings January 2019* [online]. Available at: <https://www.cbba.org.au/broadcasters/get-data-national-listener-survey-station-census>

² Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (2019). *State of the Community Broadcasting Sector*. Available at: <https://www.cbba.org.au/article/state-community-radio-sector-report>

³ Ibid

⁴ Paul Donoghue, 22 March 2018, "Commercial radio is not playing enough Australian music, researcher says". ABC. Available at: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-03-22/commercial-radio-missing-australian-music-quotas-researcher-says/9575146>

⁵ Maddy Macfarlane, 8 June 2018, "Community radio is growing the music industry", The Industry Observer. Available at: <https://www.theindustryobserver.com.au/community-radio-is-growing-the-music-industry/>

Providing diverse cultural opportunities, training and education

Community radio also adds significant value as a conduit for training and education of its participants and employees, particularly for young people. Community radio stations across Australia directly support approximately 1,020 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees and 26,000 volunteers.⁶

Community radio stations, because of their legal obligation to provide access and participation opportunities for its community interests, provides community members with a space to positively contribute to, partake in and create culture. For example, volunteers at one of Sydney's community radio stations may curate programming on-air as a presenter or producer, host or partner in live music events or host or partake in training initiatives.

In Sydney key examples include:

- Radio Skid Row runs a training initiative for aspiring Indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse Sydneysiders who want to make content about their cultural background through innovative media creation including video, audio storytelling and podcasting.
- MusicNSW and FBi Radio partner to deliver Women in Electronic Music Masterclasses, aimed at building electronic music skills across songwriting, production and more.
- Koori Radio runs the Young Black and Deadly program, training young Indigenous people interested in media, performance and the arts, as well as an artist development program which looks to promote, showcase and develop emerging and established artists.
- Fine Music Sydney has an annual Artist-in-Residence program for NSW classical artists, which is valued at \$10,000 and gives artists access to studios for recording, sound engineers, rehearsal facilities and promotional and marketing support.

Partnerships and connections across Sydney

Sponsorship and partnerships are a core part of community radio station operations. Partnering with venues, small businesses, and other community broadcasters contributes meaningfully to the vibrancy of night and day time economies in metropolitan Sydney.

Key examples of this in Sydney include:

- Koori Radio presents the annual Yabun Festival, a diverse line-up of music and more from Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander communities and hosts multiple outside broadcasts throughout NAIDOC Week, including partnering with Carriageworks for Klub Koori.
- Eastside Radio produces the Global Rhythms Festival each year in partnership with the City of Sydney and Sydney Fringe Festival.
- 2SER presents and broadcasts live music events from the UTS venue The Loft (Live At The Loft).
- The CBAA's national Community Radio Network partners with LGBTQIA+ station JOY 94.9 to broadcast from the Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras, allowing stations and their communities nationally to tap into this content.

Community radio and Sydney's "music venue crisis"

Community radio and live music in Sydney are symbiotic, with live music venues vital to the cultural fabric of Sydney's night time and its neighbourhoods. The NSW Parliament's Portfolio Committee No.6 – Planning and Environment's 2018 report into the music and arts economy in NSW recognised

⁶ Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (2019). *State of the Community Broadcasting Sector*. Available at: <https://www.cbaa.org.au/article/state-community-radio-sector-report>

that there is a “music venue crisis”⁷, impacting Sydney’s live music scene, cultural vibrancy and cultural reputation.

The crisis in small to medium size venues, detailed in the report, has reduced opportunities for up-and-coming artists to practice their skills and take risks, weakened the nation’s touring circuit, and reduced opportunities for touring international artists to play shows in Sydney.

This impact on Sydney’s nightlife has adversely impacted Sydney’s national and international reputation as a vibrant cultural destination. As a key mechanism in the live music ecosystem, community broadcasters’ ability to host and foster spaces and opportunities for Sydney’s unique music and arts communities has been greatly diminished.

If there are fewer venues, there are fewer associated businesses such as booking agencies and promoters, and fewer emerging Sydney musicians and artists. Because of community radio’s local focus, this means there are fewer artists, opportunities and local businesses to promote on Sydney’s airwaves. This feedback loop puts direct pressure on community stations’ ability to generate an income as well as to promote Sydney’s diverse night time activities. If less is happening and less is being promoted, fewer people are going out and contributing to Sydney’s night time economy, with the audiences that support both community radio and live music diminishing.

Policy support for community broadcasting

Community broadcasting provides a vital layer in Sydney’s music and arts ecosystem. It is an important tool and offers a unique, already-established business model for developing the music and arts of Sydney’s thriving night time economy at the grassroots.

The CBAA and community stations across NSW were buoyed by the music and arts economy Inquiry’s recognition of “the critical role that community radio plays in supporting new and emerging Australian talent, and fostering crucial links between artists and communities”.⁸ We were also encouraged by its recommendations for greater NSW Government funding and policy support. These recommendations included:

- Recommendation 41: That the NSW Government investigate options for a cultural hub that co-locates the Music Development Office, contemporary music organisations and businesses, rehearsal and performance space, community radio, writing and recording studios and a youth venue in Inner Sydney.⁹
- Recommendation 57: That the NSW Government allocate funding to community radio stations in New South Wales to foster new music and meet the costs of building suitable broadcast infrastructure, either under a new community radio grants scheme or as part of the contemporary music funding package recommended at Recommendation 8.¹⁰
- Recommendation 58: That the NSW Government investigate opportunities to amend advertising guidelines to encourage government advertising on community radio stations, where appropriate.¹¹

The CBAA has written to the Minister for the Arts to seek the Government’s support on these recommendations.

In its deliberations and report, we hope this Committee:

- Considers and adopts the above recommendations.

⁷ Portfolio Committee No.6 – Planning and Environment, Inquiry into the music and arts economy in NSW report [online] p.34.

Available at: <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/inquiries/2471/Final%20report%20website.pdf>

⁸ Portfolio Committee No.6 – Planning and Environment, Inquiry into the music and arts economy in NSW report [online] p.180.

Available at: <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/inquiries/2471/Final%20report%20website.pdf>

⁹ Ibid. p.124

¹⁰ Ibid. p.181

¹¹ Ibid. p.181

- Recognises the important role that community broadcasting plays in enhancing Sydney's night time economy via its commitment to local music and arts communities.
- Recommends that the NSW Government and local councils partner with the community broadcasting sector to develop collaborative precincts, infrastructure and facilities that support Sydney's live music and arts economies.

We are committed to working closely with the NSW Government and this Committee to further share our ideas, experience and knowledge. As the peak body for the sector, and an active participant in research, policy and planning in broadcasting reform, the CBAA is well placed to provide further advice and would welcome the opportunity to appear before the Committee at its upcoming hearings.

Kind regards,



Jon Bisset
Chief Executive Officer