

**Submission
No 88**

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

Name: Mr Andrew Hobkirk

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The music and arts economy in New South Wales
Portfolio Committee No. 6 – Planning and Environment
Legislative Council NSW

Re: Lack of support for all ages gigs in NSW

Dear Mr Sir/Madam,

Firstly some background:

My two of my sons play in **Black Iguana**, they are Will (18) and Piers (16) the other member of the band is 17. **Black Iguana** has been performing for about 18 months in and around the Sydney's Northern Beaches, they won **Northern Composure 2017** (organised by NBC) and **Shoreshocked Band Comp 2017** (Sponsored by Ryde, North Sydney, Mosman and NBC).

The band has played at various council family oriented events, such as Australia Day and Brookie Show, the odd Nippers event at a Surf Club. These events whilst great experience are mostly to a family audience with younger kids, not to their own age group 16-18 year olds.

The band competitions and a couple of youth club shows are the only events the band had been able to play to their own audience and age group.

All Ages Gig at the Bald Faced Stag – a positive experience:

After the band was booked for an event at the Bald Faced Stag that fell through, Will decided to run an event himself at the venue. He booked the band room for a Monday night in the School Summer holidays, booked a couple of other bands for the night, organised online ticket sales, limited advertising, even a couple of plugs on FBI radio, purchased armbands and organised staffing of the entry desk and even a photographer.

The online ticket sales where worryingly low with only 40 sold, it seems teens don't like to commit, or possibly plan ahead? On the night the event was moderately successful with 120 tickets sold in total. The tickets were priced at a very modest \$10.

After the cost of security, provided by the venue of \$150, and the other costs met, Will was able to pay each band a modest performance fee.

Dee Why PCYC All Ages NBC sponsored/run event – a positive experience:

Black Iguana was asked to play support for a well-known and popular band **Lime Cordiale**, the event was priced at \$15 per ticket and the venue has a capacity of 700. The tickets sold out, and in the weeks before the gig the secondary market for them, based on facebook post pleas from desperate teens valued the tickets at as much as \$50! The event was a huge success, I felt rather old hovering at the back, but was pleased that 700 teens came together and had a wild fantastic night in a drug

and alcohol free environment. It cannot be overstated the importance of the message to the teens there that night.

1. It is possible to have a great night out without alcohol or drugs.
2. Going to gigs is a fun thing to do.

The first message is important to society as a whole, teenagers are the risk takers of our tribe, it is well documented that their assessment of risk is not fully developed.

The second message is important to the Music Industry in NSW as a whole, the kids who go to gigs for a night out as teenagers and have fun, will be the 20 and 30 year olds who go to the larger venues in the decades to come. It is those same people who in later years will be paying \$250 to attend some stadium concert in ten or twenty (or more) years to come.

The MCA Genex event:

This is run quarterly and is a hot ticket. The audience is 16-18, and the bands are 16-18. Perhaps other similar institutions could be encouraged to support of all ages gigs as a way of connecting better with teenagers.

The loss of one of the few remaining all ages venues in Sydney:

The recent financial troubles at the Bald Faced Stag are well known, they have resulted in a change in management and more austere business model. The venue no longer opens Monday-Wednesday unless there is an event on. So and all ages event now needs to factor in the additional costs of opening the main bar on a Monday. The costs have gone from \$150 to roughly \$1100 for an event with 120 kids – so is no longer financially viable for all ages events, at least those with young less well known acts and \$10 ticket prices.

The new management of the Bald Faced Stag are not at fault here, they are just no longer in a position to subsidise the younger generation of artists.

All ages venues in Sydney available for all ages gigs:

There are basically three venues, two of these the Oxford Art Factory and the Liar at the Metro, are available as matinee shows 4-7pm only, this allows the venues to schedule an 18+ evening event later the same day, reducing their costs.

To run successful all ages events at the Oxford Art Factory or the Metro the event needs be able to sell +250 tickets at \$20-\$25. The overheads of security and insurance are heavy costs. Most of the risk of the event falls on the event promoter/organiser, this risk is \$1100-\$2000, way beyond the means of a teenage band. The cost of hiring the venue are higher for an all ages gig, primarily because the venue doesn't make money selling alcohol.

Most of the all ages events at the moment in Sydney are subsidised by grants from Music NSW or City of Sydney, without these grants there would be almost no events where young bands can play to an all ages audience.

Alcohol dependence of the Music Industry:

Alcohol sales are used to subsidise Music events at almost all live music venues in NSW. Without the sale of alcohol there would be almost no music scene in Sydney - this in itself is a very sad state of affairs.

This dependence on alcohol is why the teenage or all ages gigs sector requires special support.

In times gone by:

In my youth, I am 55 years old, it was generally accepted that teenagers could access the pubs and even have a beer as long as we stayed in the corner and didn't cause any trouble. We would sneak into pubs to catch bands, and young bands got to play in the pubs as support acts.

And now?

Today there is a much stricter implementation of the law, and teenagers congregate in parks of an evening. In the parks late at night there is no supervision of this risk taking group. Vodka and worse are the drugs of choice.

With this prohibitionist approach, we have pushed our teens to the parks/beaches; the result can be clearly seen in the binge drinking culture and drug epidemics we read about daily. Society has abdicated its responsibility to these teenagers. The councils do what they can with limited resources, with commendable youth programs and a few PCYC events but this is clearly not enough.

I believe it is society's responsibility to provide a safe social environment for teenagers, and increased support for all ages music events and young bands is a good first step.

Possible solutions:

Encourage venues to support all ages gigs by offering linked subsidies to their costs, reduced rates etc... or reduction/rebate of state based taxes/duties, conditional upon support and subsidy of all ages events with young musicians.

Better funding of PCYC or council youth services with the specific purpose of supporting permanent live music venues/halls.

Subsidies to help with the provision of security, maybe NSW police could offer some assistance here, providing excellent contact points for the police to make with NSW youth.

Problems with the current grants:

The main problem is the grants that are available tend to come with very long gestation periods. Applications in one year made available for use in the following year. If we are looking to target assistance to 16-17 year olds this is impractical, requiring a level of forward planning not normally found in a teenager.

It would be better to target venues, or better production teams that organise rolling subsidised shows similar to NSW XRAYSPEx or the MCA GENEX events. Regular events with an all ages 16-18 target demographic with some (or all) component of young bands.