

**Submission
No 107**

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

Name: Mr Samuel Lilburn

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Hi there,

In this letter I will propose solutions to some of the problems that the Australian Bush Festival scene and culture is currently struggling with. The many issues that it faces are primarily of its own production, however a lot should be done to support these festivals to continue to happen, and expand.

My name is Sam Lilburn and i'm a music producer, a sound engineer and a label manager. I'm currently studying a Bachelor of Music: Sonic Arts at Adelaide University, but I spent most of my life growing up in Canberra. I've thrown small scale festivals in the beautiful NSW bush before (200 people or so). I've been attending bush festivals since 2009 when i was 18. I've played at Festivals around Australia since 2010, and watched the "Doof Scene" evolve, and react to the changing response from the general public. Things have changed alot. We used to attend bush festivals frequently, sometimes once a fortnight. They felt safe, and we always enjoyed ourselves, and most people remained very responsible. However, over the last almost decade (god I'm getting old!) the frequency of these festivals has dropped, and the crowd that attends these festivals has changed.

Most people are aware of the "bush doofs" that have happened around the country. Most of them are wonderful, however some are dangerous and unsafe. Certain festivals (a few in NNSW come to mind) in particular have given 'doofing' a bad name and image . I have attended two of these festivals, and they almost made me want to give up "doofing" in general. There are many issues with these festivals. They can be violent and unsafe. They rarely have a philosophy, a code of ethics, or a sense of community to ground them. The bush where the festival takes place is often left in terrible condition, with rubbish and other waste left everywhere. The attendees seem more reckless, and these festivals are often filled with the much more dangerous drugs (Ice, Meth, Heroin etc.). However, these festivals are not a good representation of the Australian bush festival culture.

The Australian bush festival culture is about celebrating friendship, art, music and our beautiful country. They are safe and encouraging places, they inspire awe and invoke creativity. The people who attend feel free - something that all Australian citizens should be able to feel. We are a community, we look after each other and our environment. We celebrate all that we as a country have to offer. These festivals are artistic and cultural melting pots, and people learn and grow at them. Attending these festivals has changed a lot of peoples lives for the better, myself and my friends included.

These festivals are becoming harder to organize due to pressure from authorities. The police often stand in objection to these festivals, mostly concerned that people will not be responsible. The way some of these festivals have been treated is unacceptable. They make the promoters pay the police, just so that they can still host their festival. People that go to these festivals are treated like criminals from the get go. It is important that authorities work with these festivals to ensure that they can continue to happen. We all want them to be safe, but dealing with the authorities is often the hardest part in throwing one of these festivals. It absolutely shouldn't be, the hardest part should be finding people to do waste management, and clean the toilets.

I can completely understand the response that these bush festivals have had, and i understand and sympathize with the police who have had to intervene, to shut down those festivals. Drugs can be a dangerous aspect of going to these festivals, but people are in the dark about drugs and their dangers. People are not educated about what drugs do, we are told to fear them, and to 'just not take them because they are bad for you'. This is naive and untrue, there are safe ways to take drugs, and people should have that knowledge.

A lot of people don't even know what kind of drugs they might be taking at a festival, due to the fact that pill testing at festivals is still illegal. Having free or cheap pill testing available at festivals is essential to ensuring people know what they've had. I have seen people do saliva swab drug tests, that have come back positive to drugs that they didn't think they had taken, and didn't want to take.

With pill testing, festival goers would have better knowledge about what their drugs actually are, and as a result will be able to make an informed decision about how they can take drugs safely.

For each small scale festival that we (my friends and I) have held, we have notified Police and other authorities. Spoken to counsels, forestry commissions and local property owners. We have also always ensured that there are first aid people on site, and that we provide a safe environment, with water, food and warmth available for all, for free. We ensure that information is available for people about how to party safely. We have always advocated for safe and responsible partying. There are many other festivals like this around the country, that cooperate with communities and provide an amazing safe space for people to enjoy.

I sincerely hope that the Australian bush festival culture continues to grow, it's good for people, our culture and the economy.

Cheers.

Sam