

**Submission
No 165**

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

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Hello,

My name is Jack Lincoln and I am a musician, composer and producer living in Sydney. As a bit of background knowledge about myself I am formerly from Shellharbour, South Coast where I lived for 19 years studying music at the Wollongong Conservatorium of Music (studying jazz and trombone with opportunities such as tours to America and experience playing in small groups, symphony orchestras, rock groups and everything in between) and attending Wollongong High School of the Performing Arts. I am currently studying a Bachelor of Performance (jazz) at Sydney Conservatorium of Music whilst maintaining a career as a working musician playing trombone, tutoring school students aged 9-16 and embarking on my own solo recording projects under the name Ducks (in which I play guitar, bass, drums, synths and vocals in a home recording environment and play with a live band)

As I am sure you are well aware, Sydney's reputation as the centre of live, creative and unique music in Australia (and the world) has essentially caved in entirely. There can be said to be many reasons for this ie pokies, noise restrictions (mostly from new residents complaining about historical venues playing live music even though they would know about the music noise before moving) lockout laws (although the music scene was already dwindling before then) and overall a culture not promoting live music.

Compared to other world cities such as London, New York etc we are very far behind in terms of live music performance- there are plenty of innovative and incredible artists living in Sydney but they are not being able to get their names out into the open, not being nurtured and certainly not having enough live venues or a culture of people going to live venues to take the next step up. Having worked with many different musicians from across Australia I know that it isn't just a lack of culture in Australia itself- Melbourne is very renowned for it's music scene (as they have overtaken us within the last 20 years) as well as Brisbane and Perth.

Sydney is looked upon as a joke for live music in comparison from the musicians from these areas (not for our musicians but because of all the things happening behind the scenes such as lack of venues, lack of culture, people going out to shows etc) and increasingly more and more musicians are moving away to seek better fortunes/actually sustain a living through their art rather than roughing it in Sydney.

Judging by the fact that there will now be an inquiry into live music in New South Wales as a whole it is evident that the government agrees that something must be done too.

The ideas I put forward are related mainly into creating a social culture and community that nurtures and enjoys live music as well as legislation which will help the community to grow and bring Sydney to the hotspot of music culture in Australia again as well as expanding out to all of New South Wales.

First and foremost growing up in the South Coast I understand how seemingly difficult it must seem for a live music community to grow and prosper- however I would like to use Wollongong as a model. Wollongong live music scene over the past 2 decades had been seen as quite bleak (besides in the 80's and 90's when live music was prospering in Sydney) until Yours and Owls entered the picture. Yours and Owls started off as a simple bar/cafe aimed at playing regular live music a few times a week- by having this venue in action at least 3-4 nights a week a firm group of regulars began to come more and more frequently until it became a staple of a particular group of young people and ultimately building a community. Although the venue has changed hands (and is now known as Rad Bar) the sense of community has stayed intact as well as the frequency and dedication to live music, this has led to the rise of groups such as Hockey Dad (who recently placed their album 6th on the Aria Charts) and many others who support each others music and boost the scene greatly. Wollongong through this has now become a staple of national tours for upcoming bands and it isn't hard to see that although in a regional city, it can work in other regional places in NSW as well as Sydney itself.

Perhaps the government could give a boost to venues trying to put on regular live music, if a boost could be provided with enough regular advertising then over time as the community grows more and more at live shows the venues will be able to become sufficient and a great culture built around live music will have grown. In terms of changes to legislation which can affect live music there a few suggestions I might make:

For starters since the gentrification of many suburbs in the late 90's many clamps have been placed on live venues, there are stories of many historically renowned live music venues operating for decades until one new neighbour moves nearby (despite knowing about the live music environment that they were moving into) and issues a noise complaint- which then leads to live music and ultimately the venue shutting down. I think this is very unfair towards the hardworking venue owners as well as the musicians themselves and I think this law should be modified- ie disclaimers to new houseseekers of the music environment around them so that if they know its there they can move elsewhere instead of dismantling a prospering business and cultural scene so then a sole noise complaint won't do what it currently does in shutting venues down instantly. As an extension of this I would like to put forward an example at the most extreme of the Opera House forecourt- The Opera house is no doubt one of the most iconic venues for music in the world with tourists and musicians flocking from everywhere to absorb it's unique atmosphere. As it is such a cultural icon it is quite confusing as to why Opera House forecourt concert's were shut down due to noise complaints, if people move in next door to the opera house it is very evident there will be live music so why buckle to their demands when they know what to expect? If somebody moves under the flights of an airplane route knowing fully that there would be airplane noise would it make sense to shutdown the airport or airline if they received a noise complaint? I feel a change in legislation to allow traditional live music venues to operate as normal should be enacted rather than buckling to the requests of those knowing fully what they are moving into culturally which ruins the existing cultures of others.

The next point I would like to make about the need for improvements in the live music scene is the livelihoods of working musicians. For a working musician to be absolute masters at their craft they need to spend at least 3-5 hours a day working at their instrument to improve/maintain their high levels. With the lack of live music shows, venues and ultimately paying jobs from this many musicians are forced to put there music on the side and work other jobs- thereby being forced to neglect the amount of effort needed for them to be world class musicians and thereby boost the standard of quality in the Sydney music scene. An example I would like to draw on is yet again the live music scene in the 80's/early 90s. Having talked to many older and experienced musicians who were highly active during this time period to now, with the pure amount of shows every single night throughout the city no musician was doing poorly financially and would have the time to work on their craft during the day (often 5-8 hours in some case) and performing at night time- which would increase the calibre as musicians were improving together every day and night. Knowing personally many of the great jazz musicians in the scene this bar pushing led to the rise of such well known Australian jazz musicians such as Scott Tinkler, Warwick Alder, James Greening, Mark Simmonds and many many more. Unfortunately in todays scene due to the severe lack of gigs and therefore income in Sydney, working musicians are forced in to a nasty choice: either work a day job neglecting their craft, a lack of improvement due to not having the time to practice due to said day job and thereby the standard of musicianship in Sydney dropping- or move to another city which is more sustainable which countless musicians have done (ie melbourne, new york, tokyo) As Australia's most prominent and iconic city both worldwide and nationwide, should we not be attracting the best musicians in the world to live and work here? Should we not have the highest standard of musicianship in the country and one of the highest in the world? As we are known for so many other cultural things in Sydney we should we not strive to be known as one of the world's biggest hotspots for live music?

The last point I would like to make is in regards to drinking. Obviously before the lockout laws were introduced there was a huge problem in alcohol influenced violence and alcohol is served at most music venues which may make it seem like a problem. However at the end of the day drinking

alcohol, bingeing, taking drugs is not a music problem it's a social problem. I would like to put the example of Yours and Owls (now Rad Bar) forward again now- compared to other nightclubs/bars in the Wollongong CBD, Rad bar is a safe, respectful place oriented around the enjoyment and social aspect of live music, because of this there are scarcely any incidents of alcohol/drug induced violence at the venue. Looking at other nightclubs in Wollongong however there are many incidents of these taking place as the culture around them is centered around needing to drink and take drugs to have fun. From my experiences of living in Sydney thus far and having been to many music venues I have always found the crowd culture to be fun, safe, inviting, responsible and ultimately law obeying as opposed to the big nightclubs (which I won't name) which regularly feature incidences of violence, liquor and drug overdoses (all the things that the lockout laws are trying to negate) From this begs the question: if lockout laws were introduced as a method of trying to tackle the problems found in nightclubs which are mostly simply around drinking culture why should live music venues be punished with the lockout law times too? And from this why not as a solution relax these lockout laws if venues feature live music acts (most nightclubs just use DJs and mixtapes, so might need to use either innovative DJs, solo artists, bands etc instead in legislating) as an experiment as many people may flock to the social aspect of live music at a later time. I believe this could be a great course of action to take, especially if the sense of safe, responsible choices are kept intact by the community as more people are welcomed in; This could lead to an overall more safe community with less alcoholic induced violence as the good times needed for a great culture can be provided by live music instead of the need for alcohol or drugs.

To sum it up I know many entrances will be recieved for this inquiry as live music is such an amazing thing which so much people (both musicians and not) are obsessed with and it is totally essential in setting up a city on the world stage, I ask you please take on board what the community suggests as we are the ones who live for live music and for some of us how we put food on the table. Perhaps there could even be regular meetings of varying people in the scene committed to improving our musical landscape because at the moment Sydney has fallen behind so many other cities and I believe it is our duty to return to the forefront of the world stage before we vanish from obscurity.

Thankyou for reading my suggestions, if interested I am happy to talk about more ideas in person (I believe my contact details are part of the submission).

Jack Lincoln